DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 634 UD 021 532

TITLE	Island Voyagers in New Quests: An Assessment of Degree Completion Among Micronesian College Students. Miscellaneous Publication No. 4.
INSTITUTION	Guam Univ., Mangilao. Micronesian Area Research Center.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	81
GRANT	NIE-G-80-007
NOTE	96p.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Persistence: Dropout Attitudes: *Dropout Characteristics: *Dropout Rate: Higher Education: Student Attitudes: *Student Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS	Micronesia: *Micronesians: *Pacific Americans

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of a study conducted to determine the level of degree completion among Micronesian college students. The report begins with an overview of the social, geographical, and phenomenological context of postsecondary education in Micronesia. Study results are then presented for the following areas of investigation: (1) college attendance and degree completion: (2) the Micronesian college student's experience: (3) college organization and student factors affecting degree completion: and (4) the social psychology of dropouts among Micronesian college students. Appended to the report are information on the study's design and methodology and a list of colleges attended by the students in the study sample. (APM)

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Island Voyagers In New Quests: An Assessment Of Degree Completion Among Micronesian College Students

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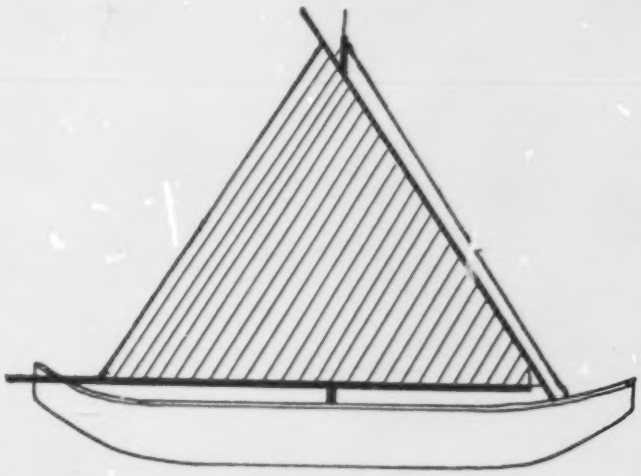

Micronesian Area Research Center

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

UD021532

ISLAND VOYAGERS IN NEW QUESTS: AN ASSESSMENT OF DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG MICRONESIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by the research team:

Randy L. Workman, Christine O'Meara, James Craig, James Nagel, Edward Robbins, and Dirk Anthony Ballendorf

ERRATA:
pg. 23 Table 2-5. Occupation $X^2=16.1$
pg. 28 Line 4 - experiencing
pg. 78 Line 12 - compose = compromise

MICRONESIAN AREA RESEARCH CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

1981

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATION NO. 4

PUBLISHED BY THE
MICRONESIAN AREA RESEARCH CENTER

This publication was printed
under the auspices of
the Micronesian Area Research Center
of the University of Guam
through a grant from
The National Institute of Education
Department of
Health, Education, and Welfare
NIE-G-80-007

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PREFACE

This study on Micronesian college dropouts is the first empirical one of its kind ever done. It began through the intellectual impetus provided by Father Francis X. Hezel, S.J. of the Micronesian Seminar at Truk. Several years ago he initiated and directed a study, which subsequently was published (PACIFIC STUDIES, Vol. 2, No. 2), about the dramatic increase in the consumption and availability of education in Truk. As the same could be said for other Micronesian states, Hezel's study received attention throughout the islands. Lynn Ilon of the Truk Education Department, contacted me regarding the possibility of developing a study of college dropouts in Micronesia as a follow-up to Hezel's work. At the time I was president of the college at Ponape and felt such an effort would be useful and worthwhile. Mrs. Ilon completed a proposal which was submitted for funding.

Several months later the study was funded by the National Institute of Education in Washington with considerable assistance from Janice Johnson at the Interior Department. However, the situation in Micronesia had shifted as Mrs. Ilon left the islands to accompany her husband on a Micronesian Liaison Office assignment in Washington, and I had left Ponape to become the director of the Micronesian Area Research Center (MARC) at the University of Guam. My successor in Porape, Fredrick W. Young, Jr., felt as I did, that the project should be implemented. Through his good offices the Community College of Micronesia Board of Regents approved of the idea of transferring the project administration to MARC. The Graduate Dean at the University of Guam, Roy T. Tsuda, was also very supportive. Thus, after the appropriate paperwork clearances in Washington, the study's management was relocated from Ponape to Guam.

During the fall of 1979 considerable reworking and redesign of Ilon's initial proposal was undertaken. A faculty research team was engaged which included Randy L. Workman, Principal Investigator, James Craig, James Nagle, and Edward Robbins, Research Associates. Much of the project's continuing management functions were performed by Christine O'Meara, Research Assistant. Working closely with Dr. Workman, she was instrumental in the smooth implementation of the design.

The team agreed that Ponape and Kosrae would be the most convenient sampling areas and consultants were engaged in both places, in Ponape Heinrick Stevens and Sidney Skilling in Kosrae.

After the questionnaire was designed, portions of it were translated from English to both Ponapean and Kosraean and then back-translated into English by different translators. This operation helped to insure the clearest possible comprehension of aspects of the instrument by the informants in the sample. We are greatful to the translators: Canston Ionno, Atalia Nena, Kanston Palsis, Jack Sigrah, Wyler Talley, Merilyn Waguk, from Kosrae; Serebiano Barnabas, Yalmer Helgenberger, Peter Joel, Dion Neth, from Ponape.

Administering the questionnaire in the field under the direction of the researchers required a number of interviewers without whom the data could not have been gathered: Swaiper Eliam, Maskie Jim, Koisimy Rudolph, Base Jack, Jefferson Peter, Meriam Prens, Farren Henry, Trihne Anson, Aklihno Shed, Bensner Etse, Rosendo Alex, Welmina Santos, Simon Awi, and Saped Santos in Ponape; Nena Kilafwasru, Kamsky Salik, John William, Hedges Esahu, Emius Nena, Teresita Talley, Almira Livaie, Adyna Shrew, Ranson Tilfas, and Junius Palik in Kosrae.

When data had been gathered it was aptly and tediously coded by Fichieko Phillip, Ichieko Phillip and Katrina Craig. Throughout the entire project the regular MARC staff members, especially Rosita Tosco and John Sablan, were a present and solid help. Jillette Leon-Guerrero Guest typed the report for final publication.

Of course the study itself could never have been attempted had it not been for all of the Micronesians who participated as informants. The encouragement and support of the island political leadership has been always a present help. All of us hope that the results of the study will be of material assistance in the formulation of educational policy in the new governments.

DIRK ANTHONY BALLENDORF
Director, MARC
University of Guam
February 1981

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study was to examine the situation of postsecondary education in Micronesia and why some students complete their college degrees while others "drop out". This is not a simple question and its importance may not be that obvious. The question contains two specific phenomena that are quite complex. First, people who have not completed a college degree at any given time include more than those who, strictly speaking, dropped out, never to finish their education. When asked, many indicate the completion of their degree has just been postponed. Some have transferred to another college and many "stop out", a term used to describe those who take time out from college studies only to return later (Cope and Hannah, 1975).

A second complexity for this study is that Micronesian students do not attend educational institutions indigenously evolved within their own cultures. The advent of Western education is very new to Micronesia, growing since the post war years and gaining momentum during the early 1960's under the Kennedy administration. There are colleges located within Micronesia and a majority of the students interviewed for this study attended colleges within the Pacific region. Yet, we are looking at a cross-cultural event. It is cross-cultural in that it consists of students from a number of nontechnological, island societies who have entered educational settings created for the purpose of an industralized world. Due to these complexities, perhaps our concern over Micronesian dropouts should not imply a crisis situation. In fact, the results of the present research suggest the situation is very complex and that speculations about what the problems are must be made very cautiously.

It is unfortunate that the word "dropout" brings forth negative meanings and the thought that something is wrong. To a student's family and community this negativity is usually expressed in terms of money spent and lost benefits. The colleges fear criticism of failure and complain of wasted teacher effort. For a student it is often felt as a lost opportunity or as a personal shortcoming for not having finished a chosen goal. These negative meanings may be misleading for a clear understanding of what is happening, and why we should care. The research reported here makes a less disparaging assumption in order to explore in

greater depth the complexity of relationships between Micronesia, Micronesian college students, and the colleges they attend which affect degree completion. The importance of this approach is less the direct need to decrease the college dropout rate of Micronesians and more the indirect need to enhance the course of change and development occurring in Micronesia. The basis for this statement is illustrated best through an overview of the environment within which this research problem takes place. The following chapter presents such a phenomenological overview in greater detail and gives insight to the ultimate issue toward which this study aspires. The Micronesian students and ex-students interviewed openly expressed this need themselves as a lack of understanding about what college education is supposed to do for them and what they are supposed to do, and be, in order to fit in. The limitations of the present research did not permit this need to be directly addressed, but as an exploratory study into the events surrounding completers and non-completers of college degrees, it provides an initial step toward understanding the interlocking nature of Micronesia and modern Western society.

The actual results of the present study are much less definitive in character, yet their contribution as baseline explorations of empirical relationships must not be obviated. The methodological techniques used to collect and analyze the information upon which conclusions are based, and their limitations, are discussed in Appendix A. Chapter two consists of a description of the study population and an assessment of the situation in regard to Micronesian college completers and non-completers from Ponape and Kosrae. The remaining chapters present more detailed explorations of potential factors in the analysis of why some Micronesian college students do not complete degree programs.

It is hoped this is only the beginning of an effort to understand the interlocking nature of Micronesia and the modern world. In these terms the results of the study may possess both material value to the emerging nations of Micronesia and theoretical value to educators concerned with the effects of postsecondary educational processes on minority students and communities. The limited resources of Micronesia must be used wisely, and the knowledge generated by research must be relevant to the decisions which confront us.

CHAPTER 1

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL LOOK AT EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE IN MICRONESIA

When the United States became the trustee for Micronesia after World War II, one of the articles in the agreement stipulated that the administering power would do all it could to promote the social development of the people. This mandate meant that, essentially, there would be American models of social institutions introduced and this process began immediately, albeit slowly. As the years of the trusteeship passed, the Americans learned more and more about the meaning of social development in the context of Micronesia and about some of the inherent differences between the islands and mainland interpretations. This learning process is still underway.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, a massive scholarship program was instituted by the United States for the purpose of making higher education available to a large segment of the younger Micronesian population. The beneficiaries of this program are very much in evidence today. More than any other segment of the population, they embody the confusion which attends the process of distinction between American and Micronesian notions of social development.

Of the great numbers who attended colleges and universities, Hezel's (1978) data and the present research suggest that about 40 percent failed to complete their degree programs. The reasons for this dropout rate, which is comparable to that of the U.S., can be partially determined by empirical analysis, and the report here does attempt this. But other analyses of a softer, subtler, and social nature are also needed and this is also being attempted, for without this side, we would be losing a vital distinction towards an understanding of the process under study.

Those of us who live in Micronesia tend to place emphasis on the size of the area and the distances involved in travel throughout the region. We delight in the expressions of wonderment on visitors' faces when we point out to them that when Majuro, in the Marshall Islands, calls on someone at the University of Guam for help it is roughly analogous to a call from a small school district in Long Island, New York,

asking a professor from the University of Wyoming to drop in for a few days. Yet, although the vast distances of open sea have been an important factor in the development of Micronesian cultures and societies, it is the land, or rather the lack of it, that has been the strongest shaping force. It is the concept and reality of limited land that has provided the fundamental impetus for the development and adaptation of the basic social institutions of Micronesia.

The organizational principles of a culture or society are given their form by the adaptive necessities of particular environmental settings and in Micronesia that means small discrete patches of land and meager resources. The available evidence seems to indicate that, given the limited amount of land available and a relatively high pre-contact population, before the arrival of Western technology, virtually all potentially productive land in Micronesia was either directly or indirectly involved in subsistence functions. This combination of limited land, long stretches of open seas between islands, and crowded communities has combined to form societies and cultures with strongly defined and enforced customs, mores, values, and belief systems. Members are quite clear as to their place in the scheme of things and complex lineages among persons and groups define, both implicitly and explicitly, the relationships between them. Colletta's (1980) description of the Ponapean way of life is illustrative:

> *...Ponapeans view their world relationally and holistically. Their approach to the world involves a more encompassing multi-directive associational mental style. First-cause explanation is a marked feature of their logical makeup. There is little extensive secondary analysis....*
> *...there is little separation of the subjective being from the objective world....*
> *...there is little stress on a universal moral order for judging all behavior, only specific events, encounters, and relationships (situations) isolated in time and space with meager connective or generalizable value. Reality is for the moment, the situation and not for all men at all times in all places.*
> *...there is little individualized image of self among the Ponapeans...personal identity is rooted in the communal social order* (p.11).

When the Micronesians of today leave their islands for higher education abroad they also leave behind this sense of place and belonging and enter a social context that not only fails to give definition, but also encourages the expression of one's own needs and desires, one's individuality. With the old constraints on behavior removed, with no social structure to define morality, appropriate behaviors, or social and personal relationships, the Micronesian abroad faces a crisis. In the social context of the islands control was clear, enforced, and external; in the new context control is unclear, sporadic, and expected to be much more internal than external. The result, not infrequently, is a sense of lost security and realization that a strange, if not confusing world must be confronted: a world that does not simply recognize a person for who he or she is, but rather judges a person by what he/she is and what he/she does. In as much as Ponape and Kosrae possess one of the most tight-knit socio-political organizational structures in Micronesia, the problem is particularly acute for their students abroad. It is more than culture shock, for that implies the impact of the new; the reaction is drawn from the loss of the familiar. The schools, the colleges and universities have taken them in as a family might, but because the Western traditional concept of '*in loco parentis*' is *passe*, the schools have taken responsibility only for students' education. With no source of external control, and no developed internal mechanisms of control, the Micronesian student abroad may fall into patterns of behavior that preclude academic success.

Much of Micronesia today is in reality a created society. It is an arbitrary structure serving a vision developed mainly in alien places, rather than an evolutionary structure, serving the emerging needs of an indigenous population. Part of this process of attempting to create a new society has involved switching models from one culture to another, from the traditional to the modern. This switch or change should more accurately be termed a superimposition, as the old has not been replaced; rather the attempt has been to make it irrelevant. To fully understand the sorts of pressures and stresses placed on Micronesian young men and women caught up in this process, it is necessary to look closely at some of the differences between the old and the new. The most appropriate vehicle, for this study, would be the institution of education, most

particularly the disjunctions between the old and the new. The attempt will not, however, be made to locate and classify sets of behavior in order to illustrate a cultural pattern. This leads only to an abstract definition or description of behavior. Rather the attempt will be made to make inferences from behaviors that will cast light on underlying structures and principles that define the lives of people in Micronesia.

The anthropologist Solon Kimball (1974) points out that:

> *...ordinarily the educational system reflects the social ordering found in social class and other institutions. It also expresses the cultural values and practices characteristic of these diverse and divergent social groupings. In this sense, education exhibits a marked congruency with other aspects of social life and culture. This affirms the interconnections between institutions and behavior (asserting neither determinancy or causality).*
>
> *Formal education differs from other institutions in its crucial responsibility to transmit, consciously, designated segments of the heritage in order to reflect and perpetuate the existing system (p. 203).*

But in Micronesia, the educational system represents a culture and a social structure that is radically different from that of the clients. This disjuncture between institution and person is bound to have ill effects on the participants. It is not the purpose of this study to develop a complete sociological analysis of the phenomenon. Perhaps exploration of one facet will be illustrative.

At the very heart of the educational process is the sociology of knowledge. How knowledge, per se, is viewed, valued, and regulated is central. To examine the traditional Micronesian concept of knowledge may make clear some of the difficulties experienced by Micronesian students. This model of knowledge can also be used to explicate some of the real differences between the old and new educational systems.

In Micronesia, knowledge is private, not public property. People possessing certain knowledge hold it carefully and do not share it openly or arbitrarily. Every person has a particular role to play in the society and the knowledge necessary for him or her to play that role is carefully ascribed. The possessors of knowledge are consulted, as a matter of course, by others when the need arises; thus, the lasher of house rafters or the master outrigger builder is sought when needed.

Other members of society will not attempt to copy him but will rather defer to his expertise; nor will he broadcast himself or offer free vocational advice.

When the time comes for the possessor to pass on his or her knowledge, a complicated process for the careful selection of a successor is undertaken. The heir is selected by consensus decision and according to clan and family status as well as ability. This process may take many years to complete. Even after the selection is made and the apprenticeship begins, the master will not tell all he or she knows. There is always an area for discovery, development, innovation, and creativity on the part of the new expert, and the new expert will not exercise full authority until the old master dies. In this way the knowledge is handed down, as well as developed, adapted and modified, from one generation to the next. Historical knowledge is treated similarly. Only certain people know the charts, songs and stories of the emergence of the clan structures and power blocks. Of course, there will be different versions in these matters and arguments arise, sometimes even leading to violence, but all know whose prerogative it is to debate. In many ways this construct of knowledge is antithetical to the Western view and students attempting to make the crossover find few referents. The concept of knowledge is thus one of power and status to be guarded carefully rather than distributed freely. Knowledge however, is not the only way in which the evolutionary and the created differ.

This view of knowledge, coupled with the traditional learning style of identification, prolonged observation, imitation, and cooperative participation has given rise to a particular orientation towards education. Communication, as an educative process, takes place along hierarchical lines from superordinate to subordinate. The search for knowledge is viewed as the pursuit of a definitive answer or explanation from a higher authority rather than secondary analyses or critical dialogue. In traditional Micronesia there was no such thing as a school in the Western sense. All members of the community participated in all aspects of community life: social, religious, and economic. Each person participated when they were ready, and readiness was intrinsically determined by each individual according to the overlays of societal role boundaries. In traditional Micronesia there was no separation between education and life,

and in this there was commonality with traditional cultures in general. The idea of Western schools changed all this. Education, the transfer of skills and knowledge, took place in a certain place, at specific times, and took no cognizance whatsoever of social structure. Life took place at other times elsewhere.

There are other basic differences between the old and new, the evolutionary and the created. For example, competitiveness and motivation take different forms in traditional Micronesia. The individual is taught to give way to the group. People do not compare themselves to others for this would lead to bitterness and resentment or even violence and this would be intolerable given the limited living space. Besides, there are always greater or lesser people in the community without the necessity of competitive definition. Motivation in Micronesia, unlike Western form, is born not of a desire to succeed, but rather of a desire not to fail. This implies a passive and deferring learning style where risks are not taken lest one fail. In the classroom this is reflected in the non-questioning, non-responsive behavior exhibited by Micronesian students.

Beginning in 1972, a massive Trust Territory post-secondary education program got underway, one facet of which provided funds for Micronesians to go to the mainland and elsewhere to attend colleges and universities. These funds were transfered into what became known as "T.T. Scholarships". In typical fashion, the program was developed by non-Micronesians with little understanding of the potential socio-cultural problems that might result. Although initially, and sporadically thereafter, some academic achievement standards, such as high school transcripts, were applied as selection criteria, no standardized tests were used, or have been developed for use in this program. What most often transpired was that funds were simply awarded to those who made application to the program administrators at the Trust Territory Headquarters in Saipan with "family status" often the only functional criterion. Once the students left the Trust Territory, there was little or no attempt at accountability. Scholarships would be renewed year after year in spite of failing grades, or switching both college and courses of study.

For their part, the colleges that received the students offered

little real help, despite their good intentions. Counselors did not understand the Micronesian culture well, and in only one known instance did one visit the islands. Despite the knowledge that the Micronesian students as a group required more counseling time than any other foreign student group, few colleges and universities have the necessary resources to send their counseling staff on fact-finding tours. Many of the receiving schools were small, often religion-affiliated, places which valued, and were glad to get, the scholarship money provided by the Trust Territory. An average of $4,000 per Micronesian student per year was available and many of these schools had, and still have, large numbers of Micronesians which certainly helps an otherwise falling academic economy in many instances.

Although no complete data is available, many of the Trust Territory scholarship recipients returned to their islands without degrees. Many returned to the remote islands to tell stories of their college adventure, and herein lies an interesting and important phenomenon of traditional Micronesia. Status accrues to these returnees whether or not they earned a degree and whether or not they did well at the school. In traditional Micronesia, relatively high status has always been awarded those who leave and return with interesting experiences and stories to tell. This fact would constitute one of the prime traditional definitions of education: to go away and come back. It has its roots in the days of European exploitation when ship captains impressed islanders as seamen. This practice continued through the nineteenth century whaling days when many Micronesians were taken aboard ships for distant voyages. Today, for many Micronesians, there is no real difference between a young man who ships aboard a freighter for a two year voyage to distant lands and returns and the young man who goes off to a small college in Weeping Water, Nebraska, for two years and returns. Both have been "educated", both have interesting stories to tell, both are worthy of respect.

Clearly this lack of congruency among society, culture, and educational process troubles Micronesian students. Throughout the course of numerous personal interviews with Micronesian students and former students, the predominant expression was one of puzzlement and confusion. There is a lack of understanding about what this education

is supposed to do for them and what they are supposed to do, and be, in order to fit in. As David Nevin (1976) states in his study of Micronesia:

> *When you tour Micronesia to look at education, you see the dilemma laid out in full. It becomes ever more clear that while people see education as the avenue to the new success, their understanding of the interlocking nature of modern western society is so slight that they remain blind to the plain fact that their own society contains so little that is capable of supporting the new ways. Surely it is the cruelest irony that it is education itself that exacerbates their blind hopes, as year by year it trains their children away from the old culture and toward an ambiguous academic form that is supposed to be consistent -- in some unknown way -- with the modern world and with its advantages* (p.148).

The ultimate community concern that led to the study reported here was this desire that educational development in Micronesia become consistent with the modern world. The first step toward some kind of consistency that is not "exacerbating" is to obtain assessments of the situation in order to accurately and specifically define problem areas. One aspect of the situation is the difference between the new and the old which frames the sort of pressures placed on Micronesian students caught up in the educational process. It is a vital distinction for placing the findings of subsequent chapters in perspective, and it is important if educational innovations are to be effective. Perhaps a final and capping irony is that the "new" education has been sold so well that when innovative attempts have been made to draw from traditional forms to restructure education, these attempts have been rejected as "not <u>real</u> education."

CHAPTER 2

COLLEGE ATTENDANCE AND DEGREE COMPLETION: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

Given the social environment of the research problem described in the opening section, the aim of this study was to collect information from a sample of Micronesians, investigate the situation in regard to college attendance, and to explore the reasons for students returning without completing a degree. The explosion in college attendance by Micronesians over the last decade reported by Hezel (1978) is continuing. The Micronesian News Service (1980) recently stated that more than 2,051 students were receiving aid from the Trust Territories Student Assistance Office to attend colleges, and this does not include those students attending regional colleges at their own expense. There is very little factual information available for educators and policy makers to assess what is happening with these students. How "successful" is this education effort and why do some finish while others do not? A few studies of Micronesian college students have been conducted but they barely scratch the surface of what needs to be known. Larson (1979) and Morikawa (1975) interviewed small samples of Micronesian students in the United States about their college experiences. The present research hoped to scratch a bit deeper in order to advance our knowledge of the situation one step further.

The findings of the study reported here were based on information collected through an interviewer-administered questionnaire with additional information obtained from high school and college transcripts, and a number of descriptive reference books on colleges and universities. A more detailed presentation and discussion of the research methodology is given in Appendix A. The islands of Ponape and Kosrae were selected for the research effort in order to concentrate the collection of data from a sizeable number of subjects. Furthermore, Hezel (1978) and Larson (1979) focused their studies on the situation among Trukese college students, and thus, this study partly expands available information to include two additional island districts. The target population consisted of Ponapean and Kosraean high school graduates between 1965 and 1978 who formed the base from which college attendees emerged. A list of names was randomly drawn from graduates of the Pacific Islands Central School in Ponape and

from Kosrae High School between the years 1968 and 1975. To ensure that an adequate proportion of informants had attended college, the list was supplemented with names of Ponapean and Kosraean students who received financial aid from the Trust Territories Student Assistance Office located on Saipan. Trained interviewers from each island self-selected names for contact. A total of 152 completed questionnaires, 90 from Ponape and 62 from Kosrae, were obtained.

Because of the supplementation with names from the Student Assistance Office and the self-selection of contacts by interviewers, the resultant study sample was not a true random sample. This restricts any justification to generalize the findings beyond the study sample. In addition, there are social and cultural differences among the island districts of Micronesia. However, an overview of the sample and comparison with the independent findings of Hezel (1978) suggest that the sample strongly reflects the situation of Micronesian college students.

The Study Sample and Setting

The social and educational characteristics of the study sample are presented in Table 2-1. A majority of the sample were male (79%). This proportion closely matches that of the target population of high school graduates who are the base from which attendees emerge. Hezel (1978) reported data that showed the proportion of males among Trukese high school graduates to be about 69 percent and among Trukese attending or graduated from college to be about 75 percent. The present study's sample had graduated from high school at least two years prior to the survey with about half (45%) graduating after 1972. The year of 1972 is a meaningful date since it was at that time that federal financial aid became available and the college explosion in Micronesia began. The proportion of the sample population who attended college (80%) is inflated from a reasonable estimate for the general population due to the sampling technique. However, Hezel reported that over 60 percent of Trukese high school graduates attended college in 1975 and 1976. In general, the study sample matches reported data on the situation in Truk and appears to reflect expected characteristics of our target population. The observation that Ponapeans and Kosraeans tend to start college immediately after high school graduation (84%) supports an assumption

that a large proportion of the sample who attended college had the minimum opportunity to at least complete a two-year college degree program.

TABLE 2-1. SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE.

Island Sampled*	(N=152)
Ponape	60
Kosrae	40
	100%
Current Age	(N=138)
21 to 26 years	36
27 to 30 years	33
31 to 39 years	31
	100%
Attended College	(N=152)
NO	20
YES	80
	100%

Gender	(N=147)
Male	79
Female	21
	100%
High School Graduation	(N=147)
1965 to 1968	14
1969 to 1972	41
1973 to 1978	45
	100%
Time between High School and College	(N=119)
1 year or less	84
Over 1 year	16
	100%

*The number of cases (N) will vary from the total due to incomplete or missing data.

The subsistence and employment characteristics of the study sample are shown in Table 2-2. The vast majority of the sample was employed (85%) with only 15 percent not in the labor force. Seventy percent of the sample engaged in some type of horticultural, fishing or handicraft subsistence activity. One does not earn, or need for that matter, a substantial salaried income in order to provide for basic needs within these island economies. About half of the study sample earned between $101 and $200 bi-monthly, or $2400 to $4800 a year and few (18%) earned incomes from their subsistence labor. The economic situation in Micronesia is such that college graduates, nongraduates and those who do not go to college can achieve relatively comparable standards of living that are respectable.

TABLE 2-2. SUBSISTENCE AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE.

Frequency of Subsistence Activity*	(N=151)	"Is Income Earned From Subsistence Activity?"	(N=150)
Rarely	30	Yes	18
Often	70	No	82
	100%		100%
Employment for a Salaried Income	**(N=148)**	**Bi-monthly Income****	**(N=146)**
Employed	85	$100 or less	32
Looking for Work	7	$101 to $200	49
Not Looking	8	$201 or more	19
	100%		100%

*Informants were asked "How often do you do subsistence work activity such as growing/gathering food, fishing, or handicrafts?" Often combines the responses "Everyday" and "1 or 2 times a month" while Rarely combines the responses "A few times a year" and "never".

**The distribution by income was not restricted to those employed for salaried income since the source was not specified.

This economic picture in Kosrae and Ponape is similar to the situation in Truk. Hezel found that most Trukese college students in the last decade have returned and found employment. His point was that demographic and economic conditions have not yet shifted to create pressures toward a speculated "brain drain" or job crunch for college students. As Hezel (1978) states:

> *...like the early high school graduates who were fortunate enough to be able to return to both family and a job on their home island, these college degree holders have found both a cultural home and employment upon their return from abroad* (p.179).

The economies of Ponape and Kosrae have also been able to absorb their college attendees into their labor forces to date, at least among this sample population.

College Dropout Rates Among Micronesians

The employment and income differences between those who attended college and those who did not will be examined later in this section. But first, the characteristics of college attendance and the major concern, degree completion, will be examined as presented in Table 2-3. The largest number of the sample (39%) first attended the regional, two-year colleges of the Trust Territories established in the early 1970's. These are the Community College of Micronesia (CCM) located on Ponape, the Micronesian Occupational College (MOC) located in Palau, and the CCM School of Nursing originally located on Ponape and later moved to Saipan in 1975. Another 20 percent attended college on Guam. A majority of these were at the University of Guam (UOG) but several attended the two-year Guam Community College (GCC). A complete listing of colleges attended by the sample is presented in Appendix B.

The number of Micronesians attending American colleges has steadily grown since U.S. federal grant programs were available to them in 1972. Over one-third of the sample traveled to Hawaii or the United States to begin their college education. This was largely due to the fact that the aid stipulates the money must be used in U.S. schools, but a growing preference for American schools has been found among Trukese (Hezel, 1978). Also, Hezel's data show a clear shift away from other locations toward locations in the United States following the availability of financial assistance. This data revealed a similar shift. An analysis of data not presented in Table 2-3 shows that among students who attended college before 1972, 17 percent went to the United States compared to 35 percent of Ponapean and Kosraean students after 1972. This drift toward American schools may be leveling off (Larson, 1979), and it is certainly an event of its times: the beginning of modernization in Micronesia, growing numbers of high school graduates, and the availability of financial aid. Thus, the situation may change but at this time the proportions of Kosraean and Ponapean students who attended the Trust Territory schools (39%) was found to be almost equal to those who traveled to Hawaii and the United States (37%). What the data suggest is that Micronesian students have been selective of the type of college they chose to attend.

The types of college in which Kosraean and Ponapean students first enrolled tended to be small, and slightly over half of the sample attended places that only offered two-year degree programs. In short, when they chose a school for starting their college education they avoided large, impersonal universities. Many attended the small, perhaps less intimidating schools of the Trust Territories, and this influenced the data reported in Table 2-3. Nonetheless, further analysis disclosed that among those students who traveled to Hawaii and the United States, over two-thirds enrolled in colleges with less than 4,000 students.

TABLE 2-3. CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLEGES AND DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG THOSE WHO ATTENDED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

Location*	(N=121)	College Size-Students*	(N=114)
Trust Territory	39	Less than 800	47
Guam	20	800 to 4000	40
Hawaii	11	4000 to 9000	7
Continental U.S.	26	More than 9000	6
Foreign	4		100%
	100%		

Type of College*	(N=120)	Ever Completed Degree	(N=119)
Two-year	52	No	42
Four-year	48	Yes	58
	100%		100%

"Did You Ever Stop for a Semester or More and Return?"	Ever Completed Degree: Never	After Transferred	At First College	(N=119)
No	28	6	44	
Yes	14	3	5	
	42%	9%	49%	

*Characteristics of the colleges are for the first college attended by the informants.

A graduating high school student receives advice and information from family, friends, counselors and teachers. He or she is at a major transition point in life and the decision to go to college is not made in a vacuum, although the meaning and decisiveness of choices may not be clear. At some point thoughts of "success" and "failure" often emerge. The locations and types of colleges attended by this sample indicate they did not take uncalculated risks, yet 42 percent have not completed a degree program. The difficulty in evaluating this level of non-completion is the complexity of the idea of "success". A student who returns without completing a degree may still view his or her experiences as successful and may receive different kinds of benefits from them. The social context of who graduates from high school and who even has the opportunity to go to college must be considered, also. Further complexity of the issue of college "success" and the definition of degree completion are shown in the more detailed breakdown presented at the bottom of Table 2-3.

A difficulty of all research on the completion of college is that students come and go, transfer to other places, and will usually say they have only temporarily stopped their education (Cope and Hannah, 1975; Cope, 1978). Only 28 percent of this sample simply attended college for a while and then dropped out, while 44 percent progressed through their course work and graduated from the college where they started. The other 28 percent can be called "stopouts" who left and returned or transferred, and either finished a degree (14%) or stopped out again (14%). When asked if they planned to return when they stopped out, and if they still plan to return, nearly all of the students interviewed, whether they had a degree or not, said yes. A better way to evaluate these findings is to compare the situation of Ponape and Kosrae to the situation in the United States and other nations of the world, rather than to speak in broad terms of "success".

What was found is that there is very little, if any, difference. In these terms, Micronesian college students are as "successful" as American college students. The widely accepted speculation that the general drop-out rate of Micronesians is abnormally high did not emerge within this study sample or Hezel's (1978). A number of studies on college dropouts

have been conducted to evaluate the situation in the U.S., Australia, and Great Britain (Baumgart and Johnstone, 1977; Cope and Hannah, 1975; Gracie, 1978; Hawaii University Community College System, 1979; Howell, et al., 1979; Kolstad, 1977; Lueck and Gilbert, 1978; Miller, 1973; Willner, 1979). They used a variety of definitions of "noncompleters", "nonpersisters", "withdrawn students", and so on to study the issue of dropouts, and the comparison made here is only illustrative. These American, Australian, and British studies report figures for noncompleters that range from 20 to 80 percent with the average estimate being about 40 percent never graduating (Cope, 1978). Lueck and Gilbert (1978) gave an overall estimate that of every ten (10) college students who started in 1974, five (5) would graduate sometime at that school, two (2) would transfer and graduate, while three (3) would never graduate. Comparing this to the sample survey, of every ten (10) college students or former students interviewed, five (5) graduated sometime from their first college, one (1) transferred and graduated, and four (4) have not graduated. These results lend support to the validity of Hezel's (1978) estimate of the completion rate of Trukese college students, between 1965 and 1977, to be about 62 percent. If a general conclusion is to be made at this time, Micronesian college students have completion rates comparable to other parts of the Western world.

This conclusion needs to be understood within the context of Micronesian postsecondary education to avoid misinterpretation. Very little is known about the selection process of the secondary school systems which might make high school graduates a unique group compared to the general population. If one looks at the percent of the age cohort that ultimately achieves high school graduation, then at the percent of the graduates that go away to higher education, perhaps one should really predict a much higher percentage of "success" than the "average" U.S. student population. Furthermore, it is only an overall view of completion which says little about contributions to societal development.

The merit of this finding is that it begins to document what is happening, so the continued definition of problem issues can be directed toward meaningful concerns. One implication of the similarity found between Micronesians and American college students is that researchers do not need to look for something "unique" about Micronesian cultures to understand and

and explain their levels of educational achievement which do not appear to be unique within the world. Obviously, the meaning and nature of Micronesian and American student experiences differ according to the difference in their socio-cultural home environments. To the extent that it is the student's experiences and fit with the college environment that determine whether he or she persists to graduation, these differences are important. The situation and nature of problems encountered by different kinds of students must be correctly understood if each is to be counseled and helped. What the findings of this study suggest, however, is that regardless of any such differences between cultures, there is little difference between Micronesian and other rates of degree completion.

If there is no substantial difference in the rate of degree completion, we must ask what is the role played by postsecondary education in Micronesia. Theories of human behavior assume that a person's efforts and actions are strongly influenced by the consequences they have, including the receipt of approval for having acted in accordance with understood values. As noted before, Western education is highly valued in Micronesia, but it was also noted that the socio-economic environment of Micronesia is quite different from that of the U.S. The limited picture revealed by the present study was that the role of postsecondary education in Micronesia, its benefits and consequences, may not be very different from its role in the United States. It is not surprising then, that the characteristic differences, or better - lack of differences, between college dropouts and graduates found among Micronesians are similar to the findings of American studies.

Cope and Hannah (1975) point out in their encompassing study of dropouts in the U.S. that research on withdrawal from college provides little conclusive evidence identifying factors associated with leaving college before completion. Most of this research has focused on general social characteristics, such as sex, age and so on, but results have been contradictory. The hypotheses that such differences should exist derive, in part, from the fact that such general characteristics incorporate a large number of more specific differences and factors that have often made them singularly good predictors for other kinds of behavior. As shown in Table 2-4, there was no significant difference in whether or not a college degree was ever completed by the sex, age started college, or the time of leaving high school and entering college, among the study's informants.

TABLE 2-4. EVER COMPLETED COLLEGE BY GENERAL SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS AMONG PERSONS WHO ATTENDED COLLEGE.*

Ever Completed College Degree	General Social Characteristics	
	Male (N=91)	Female (N=24)
NO	51	46
YES	49	54
	100%	100%
	Age Started College	
	18 to 21 (N=62)	22 to 32 (N=39)
NO	44	39
YES	56	61
	100%	100%
	Year of High School Graduation	
	1972 or before (N=60)	1973or later (N=54)
NO	40	43
YES	60	57
	100%	100%
	Year Started College	
	1972 or before (N=52)	1973 or later (N=64)
NO	46	39
YES	54	61
	100%	100%

*Chi square tests of association showed no significant differences in degree completion by general social characteristics examined.

Even though there are clear and definite differences in the socialization practices, roles, and expectations of males and females in Micronesia, females who attended college were found to be just

as likely to have completed a degree as the males. Year of high school completion and year started college are temporal measures that tested for trends. The data suggest that dropout rates have been fairly constant since Micronesians began treking off to college. The education explosion following the greater availability of financial aid in 1972, apparently, did not send off higher proportions of less prepared or less dedicated students as some people have speculated. This constancy, too, is a trait of dropout rates revealed in studies of the United States (Cope, 1978; Summerskill, 1962). Perhaps this similarity of the general situation in college attrition between Micronesia and the U.S. can be put into some perspective by the examination of consequences and values related to college education in Ponape and Kosrae.

The Role of Postsecondary Education

Research from the United States and other countries has shown that the high value placed on education and college graduation as being a means to obtain other valued benefits and rewards has some truth to it (Banks, 1968; 39-65; Blau and Duncan, 1967). It is one link in a bridge to higher personal status, more opportunities, job security, improved working conditions, more income, as well as greater job and life satisfaction. College graduates more frequently assume leadership positions and are more informed about national issues. These are measurable benefits to be obtained from attending and graduating from college, and yet, about 50 percent of American freshmen who start at a particular college withdraw from it before graduation (Cope and Hannah, 1975). The stopout, transfer, and dropout rates of the U.S. demonstrate the impact of the fact that although education is a factor in obtaining rewards and moving up in society, it is not the only or necessarily the most important factor. Anderson (1958) for example states that *"while education certainly influences a man's chances to move upward or downward, only a relatively modest part of mobility is linked to education"*. There is no compelling reason to believe that education and college attendance play any greater or lesser role in Micronesia than they do in the United States, other than the great disparity in the natures of their cultures

and economies.

Education in traditional Micronesia, as presented in Chapter 1, would lead us to expect that the personal and status benefits received from college attendance would be substantial enough. But any additional status benefits from graduation, per se, may be minimal unless they are coupled with other and perhaps more influential determinants of social mobility in Micronesia. One such determinant is kinship which a person can do little to change except through marriage or adoption. Of course there are other, and more accessible traditional criteria for gaining position within the occupational and economic systems of these islands. Nonetheless, a developing structure of governmental administration and public service (e.g., especially education) has mushroomed into existence over the last twenty years. It is the most readily accessible avenue to occupational and economic resources for social mobility which are non-traditional and part of the new, emerging Micronesia. College education and graduation are valued criteria for positions within these developing institutions and thus valued for the benefits which such achieved position can provide. The mixture of tradition and non-tradition within the occupational and economic systems of these islands has affected their operation so that education has a less central role than it does within an industrialized nation like the U.S. This is revealed in Table 2-5, but more important for the present research, the college graduate was found to have an edge over the person who attended and did not graduate from college.

Examining Table 2-5, the study found that college attendance and graduation among the informants has not given an edge to these persons in the salaried job market over those who only graduated from high school. However, significant differences were found in the incomes and types of jobs among these three groups. Among those employed, high school graduates who did not attend college were concentrated in manual-skilled jobs (31%) and admininstrative jobs (35%). This wide gap in occupational status very likely reflects that formal education qualifications are not necessary or the only criteria for employment positions. But those who graduated from college are clearly concentrated in prestigious professional jobs (57%). It can be said that those who attended college but did not graduate faired better than those who only graduated from high school.

One-third of those not completing a college degree were employed in professional jobs, yet 23 percent were also in manual-skilled positions compared to only 9 percent of those who completed some type of college degree.

TABLE 2-5. EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME BY COLLEGE ATTENDANCE AND DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG THE TOTAL SAMPLE.

	College Attendance		
	NO	YES	
		No Degree	Completed Degree
Currently Employed	(N=30)	(N=49)	(N=69)
NO	23	16	13
YES	77	84	87
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=1.6;df=2; N.S.)		
Occupation*	(N=26)	(N=44)	(N=58)
Manual-skilled	31	23	9
Clerical-sales	19	16	16
Administrative	35	27	19
Professional	15	34	57
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=1.6;df=6; p<.05)		
Bi-monthly Income	(N=31)	(N=48)	(N=65)
$100 or less	35	46	21
$101 to $200	42	50	51
$201 or more	23	4	28
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=13.9;df=4; p<.05)		

*Crosstabulation for occupation was limited to those currently employed.

This apparent advantage from college graduation, rather than attendance only, is revealed in bi-monthly income as well. Again, the data suggest that factors other than formal education are operating, since those wh

only graduated from high school tend to earn more than those who did not graduate from college. Attending and graduating from college had, however, definite monetary benefits over attending college and not graduating. This value of graduation has not escaped those who attended college. As shown in Table 2-6, informants who completed a college degree were more likely to identify 'earning more money' as a benefit of their college education than those who did not.

Among those who attended college, graduates were also more likely to think their education helped them to be better at their work than non-graduates (Table 2-6). Consequently, in addition to identifying graduation as providing a direct benefit toward social mobility within the emerging society of Micronesia, the informants indicated that graduation is also valued as a means for improved job performance. Whether or not this confidence on the job actually contributes to promotion and advancement would require further research. What the data suggest is that graduation is perhaps viewed as contributing to relevant criterion for promotion and advancement which would strengthen values held about graduation as a means for obtaining other valued rewards. The role of education in Micronesia is not that much different from its role in other parts of the Western world, including the United States. Graduation from college, whatever college or type of degree it may be, is valued for its benefits and consequences.

As with most developing regions, education and, more specifically, college graduation do not play such a central deterministic role in social mobility as they do in the United States. Graduation does not differentiate perceived benefits in getting a job, having more influence, getting more prestige, knowing more about life, and so on, although the percentage distributions were in the direction of benefits received from college graduation (Table 2-6). This will depend upon the extent to which educational qualifications become a necessary requirement for positions of high status (Banks, 1968). The fact remains that, within lower status groups, a person is more likely to gain social standing if he or she has graduated, and at the same time college graduation lessens the possibility of losing social standing among those in higher status groups. Insofar as this is an immediate and motivating concern of

Table 2-6. VIEWS OF EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS BY DEGREE COMPLETION AMONG PERSONS WHO ATTENDED COLLEGE.

Did college help you:	Degree Completion NO	YES	Did College help you:	Degree Completion NO	YES
Make more money	(N=48)	(N=65)	Be better at work	(N=47)	(N=65)
Very much	40	61	Very much	47	78
A little	54	31	A little	49	20
Not at all	6	8	Not at all	4	2
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	(X^2=6.3;p <.05)*			(X^2=12.1; p <.05)*	
Get a better job	(N=47)	(N=67)	Have more influence	(N=48)	(N=65)
Very much	45	54	Very much	23	38
A little	34	33	A little	42	40
Not at all	21	13	Not at all	35	22
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	(X^2=1.5; N.S.)			(X^2=4.1; N.S.)	
Earn family pride	(N=48)	(N=65)	Get more prestige	(N=48)	(N=66)
Very much	29	48	Very much	27	36
A little	52	37	A little	44	44
Not at all	19	15	Not at all	29	20
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	(X^2=4.0;N.S.)			(X^2=1.8; N.S.)	
Help family more	(N=48	(n=66)	Be more self-confident	(N=48)	(N=67)
Very much	44	55	Very much	63	75
A little	56	42	A little	35	25
Not at all	0	3	Not at all	2	0
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	(X^2=3.2;N.S.)			(X^2=2.9; N.S.)	
Know more about life	(N=49)	(N=66)	Be more satisfied with life	(N=46)	(N=67)
Very much	55	74	Very much	28	49
A little	39	24	A little	63	43
Not at all	6	2	Not at all	9	8
	100%	100%		100%	100%
	(X^2=5.2; N.S.)			(X^2=5.1; N.S.)	

* Degrees of freedom for all crosstabulations was 2.

many college students, then it is not surprising to find a similarity in the general situation of college dropout rates between Micronesia and the United States, regardless of other differences.

This is not to say that dropout rates in Micronesia are any less problematic than elsewhere. Dropout rates of 40 percent in the United States are considered to be extremely problematic. In fact, given the economic environment, the societal need relative to community development, the governmental investment in financial aid, and in general the emergent situation of Micronesia as a developing region, perhaps it is more problematic. The major finding of the present study was to gain perspective on what is happening. What is happening is that the broad situation of postsecondary education in Micronesia is similar to the situation elsewhere. It should be viewed less as something unique to Micronesia, due to the fact that it is Micronesian, and viewed more as a universal problem, with programs and solutions that can be innovated and applied by Micronesians as well as by anyone else. Nonetheless, whatever programs are developed, they will be applied to Micronesian students, and this fact necessitates an understanding of the college experience for the Micronesian student.

CHAPTER 3

THE MICRONESIAN COLLEGE EXPERIENCE: A STUDENT PROFILE

The emphasis of this chapter is to examine the college experiences of Ponapean and Kosraean students and former students who comprised the study sample. In order to examine these college experiences, a holistic approach is necessary. The onset of the college experience occurs long before the student actually sets foot on campus to enroll in classes. It originates with one's aspirations and reasons for goirg to college. This pursuit of definite goals contributes to a framework of the college experience. In addition, considerations for attending particular schools because of interest in a program or field of study, receipt of financial support, and suggestions of family members or counselors make a contribution to the formative stage of the college experience.

The college experience continues with numerous transactions and interactions during the time students are in the physical environment of the college, *in situ*. These factors can be divided into the interactions between the individual and the institution, and between the individual and his or her peers. Individual and institution interaction is comprised of both academic and social characteristics. The college administration, faculty, extra-curricular activities, and services provided by the school are viewed as social characteristics, while class attendance, class participation, and academic performance constitute academic characteristics.

A student's interactions with his or her peers and the student's living arrangements are additional dimensions of the college experience. Students influence one another both academically and socially. They provide competition and support in academic pursuits, and socially they allow for an exchange of friendships.

In general, the college experience is composed of many variables which stem directly or indirectly from going to college. Indirect variables may be family aspirations, whereas direct variables arise from the student's interaction with the college environment, the institution, and peers. All of these factors may influence a student's completion of a degree or his or her withdrawal from college. Thus, this examination attempts to gain a better understanding of the Micronesian college student's experiences.

Reasons for Going to College

Previous chapters and other postsecondary studies note that college enrollment among Pacific Islanders has increased noticeably in recent years (Hezel, 1978; Larson, 1979; NASULGC*, 1977).

> *The ethnic minority experienceing the largest growth in full-time enrollment (among land grant colleges and state universities) during 1974 to 1976 was the Asian/Pacific Islanders* (NASULGC, 1977, p. 2).

As the numbers of Micronesian students who pursue postsecondary education has increased the reasons for going to college have become greatly varied. The reasons students have commonly cited reflect both personal goals as well as compliance with the wishes of others, such as family members and friends. The pursuit of higher education based on personal goals included career preparation, knowledge, and interest in a particular field. Cope (1978) points out that attitude and commitment to goals are important individual characteristics and he refers to studies that suggest the higher the personal expectation for a degree or occupation the greater the likelihood of remaining in college.

Degree completion in itself was considered important by 96 percent of those persons attending college and a high percentage indicated that their families felt it was important also. This was the case regardless of degree completion. Among those students who did not continue their college programs 94 percent agreed that they felt it was important to finish school compared with 98 percent of the graduates who felt this way.

It can be observed that Micronesian students expect to fulfill certain goals which are reflected in reasons they stated for going to college (see Table 3-1). For example, in regard to career goals, eighty-nine percent indicated they needed a college education to obtain a job. Over half viewed a college education as a means of earning a lot of money. Forty-eight percent of the students decided to pursue college in order to further their education because they were interested in learning.

Attendance at colleges in the region as well as foreign and mainland schools provide all Kosraeans and many Ponapeans an opportunity to leave their islands and more than half indicated this was a reason for going to college. Those respondents who elaborated on other reasons they

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*National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges

TABLE 3-1: REASONS FOR GOING TO COLLEGE

Reasons for Going to College:	Percent Overall YES	NO	TOTAL
"I needed a college education to get a job" (N=115)	89	11	100%
"I needed to go to college to earn a lot of money" (N=116)	59	41	100%
"I wanted to leave the island" (N=115)	58	42	100%
"I got a government grant" (N=115)	80	20	100%
"A family elder or parent said I should go" (N=115)	52	48	100%
"I had no particular reason" (N=114)	34	66	100%

"Other than these reasons, what is your biggest reason for going to college?" (N=77)	
Duplicated statement of a fixed choice option (above)	1
Further education	48
For self experience - inner directed to enjoy life, to meet people	12
To experience other places, culture, lifestyles	17
For income or career award	5
To help the family or at their request	5
To help society/community - outer directed	10
Lost a job so returned to college	1
	99%* TOTAL

*Due to rounding error totals may not equal 100%

considered important included inner-directed reasons such as the experience, and an opportunity to enjoy life and meet people, as well as to experience other places, cultures and lifestyles.

Additionally, many students went for reasons that were external to themselves. Financial incentives prompted considerations for attending college in that a large majority stated receipt of financial assistance as a reason for going. Consideration of and compliance with the suggestion of a family elder or parent as a reason for attending college was cited by half of the respondents. Other external or outer-directed reasons were geared towards helping their society and community.

A closer look at those persons attending college indicates that 81 percent or ninety-six students selected elective courses or major fields of study because of their own personal interest. While only 2 percent never chose a major, it was observed that once the students decided upon their major field of study almost three-forths did not alter their majors. In a recent study of the impact of college on those students who persist in school and those who do not, Kowalski (1977) concludes that "*one can speculate that having a definite educational goal in mind enhances persistence in college* (p. 77)." Among the Micronesians who stated they had no particular reason for going to college, 46 percent never finished while 54 percent graduated. These percentages are not significantly different in the completion and dropout rates for the entire sample; however, the completion rate (61%) was slightly higher for the group that did have particular reasons in mind.

Reasons for Attending Particular Colleges

Just as the reasons for pursuing a college education may vary, so do the reasons for attending particular schools. These Ponapeans and Kosraeans made deliberate decisions about the specific colleges they chose to attend and were aware of other colleges and their program offerings prior to making their choices. In fact, 64 percent felt that they had other options among colleges besides the ones that offered financial assistance. Two reasons that were noticeable with regard to the choice of schools were the types of programs offered at the college

and the fact of financial assistance. An examination of the data shows that 69 percent of the students attended the college of their choice because they were interested in a particular program it offered. Financial aid awards stimulated an additional incentive as 60 percent indicated this factor influenced their selection of colleges (Table 3-2).

Other people played a role in influencing college choices among this group. Thirty-eight percent stated high school counselors and teachers suggested particular schools and that this influenced their decisions. About one-third indicated their families or peers shared in their decison or selection of which college to attend. They reported that family members or friends had attended the school or lived in the area and that this was a reason for going there also. However, in a study of Trukese college students attending school on the mainland United States Larson (1979) noted, "*while a student may go to a school because of a certain program, even more often attendance is on the advice of a friend or relative already at the school or who has attended it in the past* (p. 16)." Larson's findings and interpretation were that this is an important reason and that it may override the student's own choice and reason for attending a particular college. This role or influence of others with regard to college selection and attendance is certainly a topic for further research and exploration.

The general environment and location of the colleges also played a part in the choice of schools. Two-thirds of the respondents selected their school because they liked the location and the weather. Astin (1968) placed emphasis on the physical environment of the surrounding town and community and the climate of the particular geographic region where the student attends college. He stated, "*Any or all of these physical characteristics of the college environment can affect the progress and development of the student* (p.84)." Among these Ponapean and Kosraean students attending college in the United States, there appears to be a trend towards the west coast and south to mid-western regions. Larson (1979) noted that among the Trukese students he sampled, the west was the regional preference,and Urbanowicz (1978) concurs, "*...there appears to be an inordinately large proportion of Micronesian students in Northeastern California* (p. 7)." Overall the student's attitude toward the general environment and the school's location was

TABLE 3-2. REASONS FOR ATTENDING A PARTICULAR COLLEGE

Reasons for Attending a Particular College:	Percent Overall YES	NO	TOTAL
"It was the only school I knew about" (N=121)	17	83	100%
"It was the only school I could get into" (N=120)	36	64	100%
"I was interested in a particular program the school offered" (N=121)	69	31	100%
"I was awarded financial aid from the school" (N=121)	60	40	100%
"Teachers or counselors told me I should go there" (N=121)	38	62	100%
"Family members or friends had been to school there or lived in the area" (N=121)	33	67	100%
"I liked the location of the school, the weather, and it seemed nice" (N=121)	68	32	100%

that they were quite acceptable.

A comment repeatedly made during conversations was that going to school and living with other Ponapeans or Kosraeans often interfered with school work. The wishes of others, especially among kin, created demands on the students. They often abandoned their own preferences for the sake of others' when confronted with the dilemma of studying versus participating in other activities with cousins or relatives, and friends. They felt compelled and obligated to join them and to postpone their own studies. On other occasions, several persons indicated they chose not to attend regional schools such as Guam or Hawaii because of the large numbers of Ponapean and Kosraean students attending these schools and that social obligations to these students would hamper their own studies. On another occasion, one student stated he was transfering from the Micronesian Occupational College to a two-year vocational college on the mainland, primarily because of the program it offered and secondly because there were no Ponapean students at that school. He did mention, however, that there were other Micronesian students from Truk attending the school and this contributed to his decision to attend. Living arrangements among this sample from Ponape and Kosrae were also examined as being an integral part of the college experience.

Domicile Patterns

Domicile arrangements among this group did not correspond with residence during a particular class level or year but students were asked to comment on their living arrangements throughout their college experience. Student's place of residence has been examined by researchers to determine what affects it has had on college completion or non-completion. Residence on campus has significantly influenced persistence rates when compared to residence with family, relatives, friends or in other private residences (Astin, 1968; Cope, 1978). Since 61 percent of the Ponapean and Kosraean college students were enrolled in schools outside of the Trust Territory, including Guam, most students relied upon the college or sponsors to provide housing. As might be expected, almost three-fourths lived in the dormitories or other college housing.

These Micronesian students generally did not live alone. When they lived off campus they shared housing with either other Micronesian (38%) or non-Micronesian (33%) friends. In a few cases, students had the opportunity to live in a family setting either with non-Micronesian sponsors or with their own relatives or Micronesian friends. Among this sample there was no significant difference between finishing college and the place of residence, however dormitory residence was slightly higher among those students who completed college than those who did not. As noted in this discussion of resident patterns, interactions with friends and living arrangements overlap in many instances.

Peer Interaction

A student is influenced to a large degree by exchanges and contacts with fellow students and friends, both in the academic and social settings at school. These peer interactions and their effects among college students have been the topic of numerous studies (Astin, 1968; Spady, 1970; Bradshaw, 1975; Fetters, 1977). Bradshaw (1975) stated "... *students learn a considerable amount of both academic and extracurricular material from one another* (p. 290)." And as Astin put it:

> *...from the point of view of the prospective college student, the stimuli provided by his peers may represent the most significant aspect of the college environment... The effects of such stimuli are more pronounced for those students living away from home in dorm or other types of college housing shared by students* (p. 7).

Ponapean and Kosraean students described their interactions with peers which contributed to their overall college experience. They turned most often to other Ponapean or Kosraean students for collaboration or assistance regarding academic matters or personal difficulties more so than to non-Micronesians. Forty-eight percent reported they studied for exams most often with Micronesian friends only. Again, Micronesians were conferred with more often when deciding what courses to take. Over one-half indicated they talked with Micronesian friends about enrollment in courses rather than with non-Micronesian friends. Twelve percent spoke with friends who were not of their ethnic background about their problems but

half of the students talked mainly with friends who were Micronesians.

In activities of a more social nature they were not as reliant solely upon other Micronesians. They engaged in interactions with non-Micronesians or the combination, non-Micronesian and Micronesian friends, more frequently. However, leisure time was spent most often with Micronesian peers. The group reported eating meals more often with Micronesians and secondly with the combination of Micronesian/non-Micronesian friends. Participation with non-Micronesians when going to parties increased slightly; however, three-forths mingled with either Micronesians or the combination group. Dating among the combination peer group was a little more common than dating strictly Micronesians or non-Micronesians. Seventy percent of the Kosraean and Ponapean students reported they had no difficulty getting to know members of the opposite sex.

About three-forths of the students preferred to go to social events that were associated with their schools instead of attending activities in other places. Mobility or transportation did not appear to be that much of a difficulty, which would coincide with the observation that many of the students resided on campus and preferred attending campus functions. The lack of finances was considered by about half of the informants as hampering their involvement in social activities.

Studies of peer interactions suggest that "*peer support in a collegiate social system has been shown to be associated with persistence in college* (Cope, 1978)." A comparison was made between graduates and non-graduates, and their associations with friends. The overall trend was primarily association with other Micronesians, albeit graduates interacted more often with the combination of Micronesian/non-Micronesian friends in academic and social matters than did non-graduates, yet the difference was not significant.

Environmental Aspects of Postsecondary Education

Colleges are complex institutions which incorporate the dispensing of information and the promotion of intellectual growth within a social environment. Studies of the dropout phenomena in higher education suggest the likelihood of college completion or non-completion involves

this interaction between the individual and the institution (Astin, 1968; Spady, 1970; Fetters, 1977; Kowalski, 1977; Cope, 1978) and the following chapter examines this association. One approach that was adopted in the analysis of the Micronesian students' college experience was based on Tinto's concept of integrating the student with the institution along two dimensions, the academic and the social (Cope, 1978). Adhering to this basic framework the administration, faculty, and school-associated extra-curricular activities comprised the social dimension of the student/institution interaction. Living arrangements were also included in this category. Thus an examination of the Ponapean and Kosraean students' attitudes and their interactions within the college setting can provide a general picture of the types of exchanges they experienced with the schools.

Basically a positive attitude toward the college and affiliated services prevailed. Micronesian students, both those attending mainland and regional colleges, indicated satisfaction with the college in general, with their majors and with their teachers. Ninety-two percent liked the colleges they attended and their college experience as a whole, regardless of whether or not they finished college, or if they attended a community college or a four year school. Favorable attitudes toward their college experience among non-continuing students and graduates within Hawaii's Community College system were observed in greater detail by Kosaki, et al. (1979) and appeared consistent with this group of students' attitudes.

Most agreed that student services were easily accessible. When queried about their use of the facilities that were available, such as the library, recreational facilities, financial aid, and counseling, a high percentage indicated they utilized these facilities. With particular reference to the counseling services, more than three-forths reported they found these services to be good as well as useful. A study of international students at a U.S. university by Stafford, et al. (1978) suggests that among those international students utilizing services, there was a high rate of satisfaction and that a large percentage of the students used their academic advisors, the library, and foreign student advisors. Many of the Micronesian students from Kosrae and Ponape agreed that the colleges provided programs and activities

which promoted a feeling of welcome and comfortableness among foreign students.

The academic dimension of the college experience did not concentrate strictly on the student's academic performance as measured by the grade point average (GPA) due to the biased transcripts that were made available. Because a limited number of respondents provided permission to have their transcripts included as a part of their college experiences, the sample was too small to be applicable and resulted in a shallow academic dimension. However, this dimension of academic performance requires further research. An attempt was made to offset the limited transcript information by examining the Micronesian student's attitudes toward courses and class participation.

Course structure and schedules were quite compatible with student's attitudes. Over three-forths of the students felt comfortable with course/class schedules and getting the subjects they wanted. More than half noted that adequate information about courses was available, and 71 percent had a clear understanding of the courses that were required for their majors.

In a study conducted at the University of Hawaii, participation in discussions and class attendance was shown to be a significant academic consideration among students (Kowalski, 1977). Among the Micronesian students in this sample, all but 2 percent went to class on a regular basis. A little less than three-forths of those students who finished college indicated they did have a high rate of class attendance but the remaining students (28%) were a bit more lax about going to class. More than half maintained an intermediate involvement in class discussions and the contribution of their viewpoints. Several students felt their contributions in class were high but 26 percent maintained a low profile and reserved their viewpoints and limited their participation in class discussions. There was no significant difference between class attendance and discussion participation with degree completion or with the type of college (community college or university) attended.

Tinto proposed that a student's evaluation of the academic system and of the social life on campus provides a measure of the academic and social integration the student experienced. Likewise, the National

Longitudinal Study (1977) concluded:

> *...if the integration of the individual into the institutional environment is successful, either academically or socially, the individual is more likely to remain in the institution* (p. 46).

Because social interactions are inherent in college experiences, it was necessary to examine this topic in light of the Micronesian college student's attitudes toward the administration and faculty, extra-curricular activities, living arrangements, and interactions with peers. Chapter 4 investigates the student/institution interactions among this group in greater detail.

Research on the impact of college on persisting and non-persisting students in Hawaii indicated that, if students experience a positive personal relationship with their advisor and faculty, their chances of remaining in school were influenced by those interactions (Kowalski, 1977). While this report did not examine the degree of influence of faculty/student interactions, it did investigate attitudes toward those interactions. A large majority of the Ponapean and Kosraean students viewed their interactions with the administration as basically helpful. Most believed their professors showed interest in the students enrolled in their classes and more than three-forths indicated their teachers encouraged students to meet with them during their office hours outside of class. An unusually high percentage (81%) reported it was easy to talk with their teachers about their class work.

Participation in extra-curricular activities among students was fairly evenly distributed as a little more than half reported involvement with organizations at the school, while fewer than half were not involved. The types of organizations in which students participated are common throughout college and university campuses. They include student government, foreign or Micronesian student associations, recreation, religious, and community organizations. Sports oriented groups such as intramural and intercollegiate activities and student association groups (Micronesian/foreign student clubs) were more popular among three-forths of the students who participated in college organizations.

Although, in their own judgement, many of these students stated they contributed to class discussions and participated in class, many educators associated with Micronesian students feel this is a problem. Overall, they are reluctant to speak in the classroom or to talk with their teachers about class work. A Ponapean and former science instructor at the Community College of Micronesia discussed the Micronesian student, classroom, and teacher interaction. He stated it was difficult to get students to meet with him and talk about their studies. *"Often there is a communication problem between the student and the teacher. These Micronesian students do not want to face the teacher* (obtained through personal communication)." Clearly, a deeper look at this issue may provide a better understanding of the students' interactions with their instructors and the nature of their studies.

Reasons for Discontinuing College

In a description of college student trends during the 1970's, Levine (1980) reported that "...*today's students are also more likely to drop out of college or stop out for a term or longer...* (p.6)." This trend is also evident among Micronesian college students. The term 'dropout' implies discontinuing college without intention to return, while 'stopping out' indicates a temporary discontinuation of a college education with intentions to pursue studies at a later time. Reasons for discontinuing college can be divided into the two broad categories of academic and non-academic withdrawal (Spady, 1970; Fetters, 1977; Cope, 1978). Academic withdrawal includes discontinuation of studies because of academic disability, failure, probation, and dismissal or the unavailability of classes. Non-academic withdrawal is broader in definition and includes physiological, psychological, social and economic factors. Specifically, non-academic withdrawal may consist of mental and physical health concerns, homesickness, pressures or requests of family or friends, conduct dismissals, housing difficulties, and lack of finances, to name a few. Cope (1978) reports the following topics as comprising non-academic reasons for dropping out or stopping out:

> *...non-academic reasons include boredom, a sense of 'wasting time,' financial hardship, lack of motivation, psychiatric problems and so on* (p. 2).

In comparing problems encountered and perceived by minority international university students in the United States, Gibbs, et. al. (1975) assert that:

> *The sudden growth of a group of a different racial and cultural background was accompanied by problems of academic, social, and psychological adaptation to the university milieu...*(p. 430).

Adaptation or non-adaptation in these areas of academic, psychological, physiological, social and economic related matters contribute to the student's college experience and consequently to his or her completion or non-completion of a college education. The same applies to Micronesian students that attend college abroad as well as regional schools. "*Dropping out has been shown to involve interaction between an individual and an institution* (Cope, 1978)."

In order to examine this interaction more closely and to explore reasons students from Ponape and Kosrae cite for not completing college, students who stated they had discontinued college or trade school were asked to comment further. Only 10 percent indicated a possible academic withdrawal in which they discontinued school because they were dismissed. For the sake of discussion, these dismissals from the institution include both misconduct and inadequate grades. Misconduct refers to violation of school rules, such as drunkenness, troubles in the dorm and so on.

Although the college records which were included as part of the educational data are not representative of the entire sample of college attendees (see Chapter 4), a brief review shows that 17 percent had a college GPA of 0 to 1.67 (D+ or Less) while an additional 23 percent ranged from 1.68 to 2.5 (D+ to C). A second consideration about reasons given for withdrawal can be contributed from the literature. The National Longitudinal Study (1977) concludes "*dropouts tend to underplay the academic problems which are the actual reasons for their dropping out* (p. 44)" and that students claim non-academic reasons for discontinuing school more often than academic reasons. This consideration may also be applicable to Micronesian students.

The most commonly expressed reason for dropping out among this

group dealt with economic matters (Table 3-3). Seventy-three percent stated they dropped out due to financial problems. Discussions with Micronesians and also with American sponsors of Micronesian students at mainland colleges have contributed a new dimension to this issue of financial problems. They indicate it is not so much the lack of funds, as the inability to manage and budget money accordingly, that poses the financial problem that many Micronesian students identify as a reason for discontinuing school. When asked to rate their preparation for college in the area of money management, most students in this sample identified their preparation as being low (41%) or medium (51%).

A large majority of the college attendees in this group reported receiving financial aid during college, either through grants or loans from the U.S. federal government programs (BEOG, SEOG, NDSL) and many students received financial support from regional or territorial sources (government grants, scholarships) as well as from their families. While the numbers of students who reported they were employed outside of the college was low (26%), this was a means of supplementing their income.

"*Lack of money is a socially acceptable reason to discontinue attending school regardless of actual financial position* (Cope, 1978, p. 8)." Additional study of this topic of finances and its role among students within the college setting was addressed by the National Longitudinal Study (1977) which concluded:

> *The existence of financial difficulties may very well interfere with academic performance...students tend to exaggerate their financial problems* (p. 39).

While this topic warrants additional research, it can be concluded that financial problems may be an important factor for withdrawal from school among many Micronesian students; however, it is not the sole factor.

The second most common non-academic factor for withdrawal from school was of a social nature. Forty-eight percent reported they withdrew from college because their families needed them at home or requested their return. A few students left school because of illness or health concerns, such as injuries or pregnancy, and some decisions to drop out were based on the student's desire for a break from school (36%).

TABLE 3-3. REASONS FOR DISCONTINUING COLLEGE

Reasons for Discontinuing College:	Percent Overall YES	NO	TOTAL
"The school dismissed you" (N=61)	10	90	100%
"You were having financial problems" (N=63)	73	27	100%
"Your family needed you at home" (N=60)	48	52	100%
"You were not interested in what you were studying" (N=61)	12	88	100%
"You were not happy in that school" (N=60)	17	83	100%

"Other Reasons" (N=11)	
Self decision - Marriage, breaktime	36
Physical well-being - Illness, injury, pregnancy	9
Self decision influenced by Others - death of family member, family problem	9
Economic - financial problems	18
Academic (Graduated)	27
	99% * TOTAL

* Due to rounding error totals may not equal 100%

Despite their discontinuing college, 88 percent stated they were interested in what they were studying. A very large majority reported they were happy in their schools and viewed their overall experiences as favorable. At the time of their withdrawal from college, 83 percent indicated they planned to return and somewhat fewer (72%) of the respondents reported they wanted to resume their studies at present. One way in which members of this group have continued their college education is through the summer extension courses offered at the Community College of Micronesia.

This overview of the Ponapean and Kosraean student depicts both attitudes toward and a description of their college experiences. This experience is comprised of interactions between the individual and his or her peers and between the individual and the institution. The following chapters examine specific areas of these interactions.

CHAPTER 4

COLLEGE ORGANIZATION AND STUDENT FACTORS AFFECTING DEGREE COMPLETION: HOW LITTLE WE KNOW

The students from Ponape and Kosrae had many different reasons for going to college and for staying to complete a degree or leaving without one. The picture revealed by the previous chapters is that Micronesians go to college and stay or leave for personal reasons that are meaningful to their families' and their own situations. College is only one of several ways to achieve several different goals. Increasingly, research is being directed toward this picture of understanding the college degree process. Recent American studies suggest that the major reasons given by students for withdrawal have shifted away from problems of academic ability toward personal concerns about maximizing life adjustment (Pervin, 1966). This trend highlights the importance of looking at personal objectives, meanings, and problems for a more clear view of the college dropout (Cope, 1978; Cope and Hannah, 1975; Keller, 1979; Kowalski, 1977; University of Hawaii Community College System, 1979; Willner, 1979). The trend also leads to the pressing questions of what does make a difference and what specifically leads a student to either stay in school or leave. Unfortunately, investigators of this issue have little to say. As Cope (1978) states:

> *.....much remains unknown despite extensive research on retention and leaving. Colleges themselves know very little about why their students withdraw. When a college maintains any record of it at all, the reasons usually given by the students or recorded by the college personnel are "financial", "academic", "personal", or "unknown": personal because it is an easy catchall for everything from serious illness to pregnancy; unknown, because many students simply leave without talking to anyone at the college. The "financial" category provides a socially acceptable excuse covering everything from fear of pending academic failure to an actual financial crisis at home. "Academic" ranges from actual academic failure to the discovery that the college does not offer the student's preferred major* (p. 1).

What we do know is that leaving college without completing a degree involves the student, the college institution, and their interaction. Colleges and universities are organizational structures. Like families, hospitals, or churches, they are "social units that pursue specific goals which they are structured to serve (Etzioni, 1964)." A college is an

organization of degree programs, courses and requirements, professors, support staff, administrators, facilities, the number and variety of students who attend to be served and which is located in a community to be served. In these characteristics, the many schools attended by Micronesian students are very different from each other. The Kosraean and Ponapean informants of this study sample were also very different from each other in their preparation, academic abilities, and goals to be achieved when they entered these colleges. The following chapter examines the relationship degree completion has with a number of these student-college characteristics.

The effect of school organization on the learning process, especially its effect on minority students, has been a concern of American educational research over the last two decades. As detailed in Appendix A, the present study failed to adequately collect the type of information on the colleges attended by informants which may be needed to analyze this concern. The information collected: location, percent foreign or minority students, and type of college (i.e.; two year or four year programs), size, and students per faculty, lacks both the necessary specificity for explanation of associations and any consistency in research findings on their relation to dropping out (Banks, 1968; Bocock, 1966; Cope and Hannah, 1975; Cope, 1978). Nonetheless, the data do support the conclusion and recommendation that future research on Micronesian college students be directed toward the issue of organizational effects on the schooling process.

The present study found type of college, college size, and students per faculty were unrelated to completion of a degree at the first college attended (see Table 4-1). Some studies have found lower dropout rates at smaller colleges (Nelson, 1966), while others found larger schools have lower dropout rates (Kamens, 1971). A relationship may exist which would be important for counselling Micronesian students, but further analysis and additional information are needed. For example, in regard to this question for American students, Cope (1972) suggests that graduates of small high schools may do better at small colleges, while graduates of large high schools may do well at large colleges. This particular advice does not apply to Micronesian students, who all come from small high schools, but it makes the point of a need to match the student and the school. The only major organizational trait found to differentiate

TABLE 4-1: DEGREE COMPLETION BY ORGANIZATIONAL TRAITS OF FIRST COLLEGE ATTENDED*

Degree Completion**	Location of First College				Percent Foreign/Minority Students		
	Trust Territories (N-46)	Guam (N=24)	Hawaii (N=12)	Continental U.S. (N=31)	2% or less (N=31)	3% to 20% (N=32)	21% or more (N=51)
NO	30	92	83	32	36	69	47
YES	70	08	17	68	64	31	53
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	($x^2 = 32.9$; df = 3; $p < .05$)				($x^2 = 7.3$; df = 2; $p < .05$)		

	Type of College		Number of Students			Students Per Faculty		
	Two Year (N=59)	Four Year (N=54)	750 or less (N=50)	800 to 3800 (N=43)	4000 or more (N=14)	10 or less (N=47)	11 to 15 (N=31)	16 or more (N=36)
NO	41	59	40	54	64	43	61	50
YES	59	41	60	46	36	57	39	50
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	($x^2 = 3.2$; df = 1; N.S.)		($x^2 = 3.3$; df = 2; N.S.)			($x^2 = 2.6$; df = 2; N.S.)		

* The five students who attended colleges in foreign countries were removed from this analysis due to their small number and insufficient information on the colleges. The total and category number of cases (N) vary between crosstabulations due to missing data.

** Refers to degree completion at first college attended rather than ever completed college degree.

Micronesians who completed a degree from those who did not was the location of the college. This factor largely accounts for the strange curvilinear association found between degree completion and percent of foreign/minority students, since the lowest percents of withdrawal occurred at colleges located in the Trust Territories and in the continental United States.

The significant association is hard to interpret because of the ambiguity in just what specific factor was measured by this general trait of location. Research has shown the greater the distance between the student's home and his or her college, the greater the chance he or she will withdraw (Aiken, 1964; Mehra, 1973; Wood, 1963). However, Guam and Hawaii are not only closer to Ponape and Kosrae than the U.S., the communities should also be more socially aware about the situation of these students. Kolstad (1977) and Cope (1978) report that American colleges highly selective of entrants have lower dropout rates. This factor may partially explain the low percent of nongraduates among students of American colleges. Many Micronesians were enrolled by the schools in conjunction with federal scholarship programs or programs started by the schools (for example, Suomi College in Michigan). But it is impossible to argue that the University of Guam and the Community College of Micronesia have entrance policies that greatly differ. In fact, a number of our informants who withdrew from colleges in the Trust Territories and the United States transferred to Guam or Hawaii where they completed a degree. The significant difference between location of first college indicates that something is happening -- but not what is happening.

One hypothesis that should be studied more directly combines the observation that students as well as colleges are selective in their choices and the demonstrated association between level of high school academic achievement and college graduation (Kleinfeld, 1978; Lueck and Gilbert, 1978; Pervin, 1966; University of Hawaii Community College System, 1979; Willner, 1979). We cannot assume that students and their schools are completely accurate in their assessments of a match between the student's ability and choice of school. The entrance policies of most schools usually set a low minimum level for test scores and high school grade point averages. However, consistent with the empirical data of this study is the proposition that students, advisors and schools

are more accurate in the student-college match for those with demonstrated high or low abilities than for those in the middle range of demonstrated ability. The hypothesis is that the greater the student's assessed level of ability and motivation, the greater the chance of attendance at U.S. colleges and vice versa for a high probability of attendance at CCM or MOC. Thus the best fit of student and school would occur at locations in the Trust Territory and the United States.

The data of the current study do not permit any firm and unquestionable conclusions about this hypothesis but they do suggest that future research directed toward the college selection process and student advisement programs might be productive. The problem is that informants with lower high school grade point averages (HSGPA) were reluctant to give permission for collecting this data. High school GPA's were obtained for barely half of the college students, with under reporting among those who did not graduate and among students who went to Guam, and over reporting among those who went to the United States. This apparent bias is displayed in the comparison between the percentage distributions for the total of the high school GPA subsample (N=67) and for the total study sample (N=121) in Table 4-2. The importance of noting this bias is that it may have contributed, in part, to our finding no statistically significant association between high school GPA and location of first college, or degree completion (Table 4-2).

If the data were biased, the tests of statistical significance lose importance, and the crosstabulation suggest that associations could possibly exist if this particular bias were corrected. Almost half of the students with above average high school GPA's first attended college in the United States (44%) while almost half of the students with below average high school GPA's went to one of the community colleges in the Trust Territories (43%). Surprisingly, in contrast to those with lower high school GPA's, a larger percent of our sample with high HSGPA's did not graduate from their first college. This may reflect the proposed hypothesis, but the problem with the data necessitates additional and detailed research. At best, we can suggest that patterns of college attendance and degree completion among Micronesians may be explained by a focus on the interaction of the student and the college institution. This interaction begins as the student tries to select a college and then continues when he or she

TABLE 4-2. LOCATION OF FIRST COLLEGE ATTENDED AND DEGREE COMPLETION BY HIGH SCHOOL GRADE POIN AVERAGE.

	High School Grade Point Average			Study Sample
Location of First College Attended	2.7 or lower (N=28)	2.8 or higher (N=39)	Total (N=67)	Total (N=121)
Trust Territories	43	33	37	39
Guam	11	15	13	20
Hawaii	18	5	10	11
United States	25	44	36	26
Foreign	3	3	3	4
	100%	100%	99%	100%
	(X^2=4.8;df=4; N.S.)			
Completed Degree at First College	(N=27)	(N=38)	(N=65)	(N=119)
NO	37	47	42	51
YES	63	53	58	49
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=0.3; df=1; N.S.)			
Ever Completed College Degree	(N=27)	(N=38)	(N=65)	(N=119)
NO	37	34	35	42
YES	63	66	65	58
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=0.0; df=1; N.S.)			

arrives to begin classes.

This was more validly shown in self-report information from the Kosraean and Ponapean students. As shown in Table 4-3, those who first attended college in Guam or Hawaii were more likely to rate their preparation in writing English lower than those students who stayed in the Trust Territories or those who traveled to the United States. This finding must be interpreted as a combined result of student-college traits and their interactions. There is little reason to suspect that the actual ability to write English among these particular students was any less than among students who attended schools in the Trust Territories. But it is within this context that the location and type of college can be seen as meaningful factors. The Community College of Micronesia and Micronesian Occupational College are organizations set up to specifically provide two-year, postsecondary education for Micronesians after they have left Micronesian high schools and achieved an expected level of English competency. In short, the fact that English is a second language for Micronesians going to schools outside of Micronesia may contribute to withdrawal from college, yet it is not a complete answer to the question of why Micronesians dropout. Feelings about preparation in English skills and written English were not found to be related to degree completion (Table 4-4). Furthermore, significant associations were not found even when the analysis was restricted to students who attended schools outside of Micronesia (i.e., data not reported).

However, a feeling of a lack of information about college was found to be significantly associated with degree completion. The feeling of not being prepared because of a lack of information about the college is not specific as to what bothered students so much that they left. It could include many traits of the college, such as kinds of degree programs, dormitory regulations and teaching styles, or the fact that the actual experience of college penetrates deeper than what a person is told to expect, especially if it is radically different from the person's previous experiences.

Examining this question, we found students who first went to Guam or Hawaii were not more displeased with the college environment (see Table 4-5) or their classes (see Table 4-6) than other students. The significant difference found between liking the college and location largely confirms

TABLE 4-3. SELECTED FEELINGS OF PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE BY LOCATION OF FIRST COLLEGE.*

"How would you rate your preparation for college in the following areas?"	Location of First College: Trust Territories (N=45)	Guam or Hawaii (N=37)	Continental U.S. (N=32)
English Skills			
High	18	3	19
Moderate	69	78	62
Low	13	19	19
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=5.7; df=4; N.S.)		
Writing English			
High	18	8	28
Moderate	75	68	59
Low	7	24	13
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=7.7;df=4;p < .05)		
Study Habits			
High	11	8	13
Moderate	64	63	56
Low	24	29	31
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=0.8; df=4; N.S.)		
Information about the college			
High	19	25	23
Moderate	64	56	63
Low	17	19	13
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=1.0; df=4; N.S.)		

*See note, Table 4-1.

TABLE 4-4. DEGREE COMPLETION BY SELECTED FEELINGS OF PREPAREDNESS FOR COLLEGE.*

Degree Completion at first college	How would you rate your preparation for college in the following areas? Low	Moderate	High
	ENGLISH SKILLS		
	(N=20)	(N=83)	(N=14)
NO	55	53	29
YES	45	47	71
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=3.1; df=2; N.S.)		
	WRITING ENGLISH		
	(N=16)	(N=81)	(N=20)
NO	69	49	40
YES	31	51	60
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=3.1; df=2; N.S.)		
	STUDY HABITS		
	(N=30)	(N=70)	(N=11)
NO	53	47	54
YES	47	53	46
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=0.4; df=2; N.S.)		
	INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGE		
	(N=78)	(N=70)	(N=26)
NO	78	43	54
YES	22	57	46
	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=6.8;df=2;p <.05)		

*See note, Table 4-1.

TABLE 4-5. PERSONAL SATISFACTION WITH COLLEGE LIFE BY LOCATION OF FIRST COLLEGE ATTENDED*

	Location of First College			
Overall, was college a good experience?	Trust Territories (N=45)	Guam (N=23)	Hawaii (N=13)	Continental U.S. (N=30)
YES	96	100	100	100
NO	4	0	0	0
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=3.0;df=3; N.S.)			
Did you like the college?	(N=46)	(N=24)	(N=13)	(N=32)
VERY MUCH	33	29	38	59
YES	50	67	38	38
NO	17	4	23	3
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=13.1;df=6;$p < .05$)			
Was your residence comfortable and satisfying?	(N=42)	(N=20)	(N=12)	(N=29)
YES	76	60	83	79
NO	24	40	17	21
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=3.1;df=3;N.S.)			
Was it hard to get involved in social life?	(N=42)	(N=24)	(N=13)	(N=31)
VERY MUCH	13	8	31	23
YES	44	50	23	39
NO	44	42	46	39
	101%	100%	100%	101%
	(X^2=5.3; df=6; N.S.)			

* see note, Table 4-1.

TABLE 4-6. SATISFACTION WITH CLASSES BY LOCATION OF FIRST COLLEGE ATTENDED.*

	Location of First College			
	Trust Territories	Guam	Hawaii	Continental U.S.
The courses were not easy to understand.	(N=45)	(N=23)	(N=13)	(N=31)
NO	71	70	54	61
YES	29	30	46	39
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=1.8;df=3; N.S.)			
It was hard to talk to the professor about class.	(N=46)	(N=24)	(N=13)	(N=32)
NO	83	71	85	84
YES	17	29	15	16
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=2.0;df=3; N.S.)			
Professors were interested in the students.	(N=46)	(N=23)	(N=13)	(N=32)
NO	9	13	8	13
YES	91	87	92	87
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=0.6;df=3; N.S.)			

* see note, Table 4-1.

the high value placed on American colleges and the experience of "real" American life. Over half (59%) the students at stateside schools said they liked their college very much compared to only about one-third of the students who attended at other locations. What was found to characterize a location of high withdrawal by Micronesians, and this was limited to Guam, were problems with class registration and counseling services. As shown in Table 4-7, the unique confusion experienced in registration for Guam was less a matter of too much paper work or understanding which courses to take, and more of a matter of not getting desired courses. This dissatisfaction with course offerings was high, also, among students at the schools in the Trust Territories. Small schools with limited budgets are at a disadvantage in offering a full range of subjects for satisfying the academic pursuits of students. But having insight into the particular conditions at the University of Guam, this stated "confusion" may combine problems with advisement and counselling at the time of registration. Registration at any college is an obstacle course of procedures, obtaining signatures in a required sequence, standing in lines, and walking from one place to another. It may be easy or difficult depending on the use of computers, the use of mail-in forms, the distances between offices, and so on; but questions still arise and students are "confused" if their experience leads them to feel that answers must not exist.

Table 4-8 presents crosstabulations of our informants' satisfaction with counselling services by the location of their colleges. The data identify this aspect of the student-college interaction process as another contributing factor to the differentiation of dropouts by location, at least for Guam. The services were viewed to be as easily available as counselling in Hawaiian or stateside colleges, and the evaluation of their quality was not found to be greatly different from other places. The students just did not find the services useful for their needs (42%). The high concentration of students from American colleges (45%) indicating programs were very helpful for students from other places mirrors the large number in our sample who participated in programs designed for Micronesians. Such programs consciously attempt to maximize success, not only by being selective of entrants, as mentioned earlier, but by attending to participant needs as demonstrated here.

The findings reported above call attention to the importance of

TABLE 4-7. SATISFACTION WITH COLLEGE REGISTRATION BY LOCATION OF FIRST COLLEGE ATTENDED.*

	Location of First College			
	Trust Territories	Guam	Hawaii	Continental U.S.
Registration was confusing.	(N=46)	(N=23)	(N=13)	(N=32)
NO	56	30	77	53
YES	44	70	23	47
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=7.9;df=3;p <.05)			
Registration had too much paper work.	(N=46)	(N=24)	(N=13)	(N=31)
NO	50	38	77	45
YES	50	62	23	55
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=5.5;df=3; N.S.)			
I couldn't get the courses I wanted.	(N=45)	(N=24)	(N=13)	(N=32)
NO	60	42	92	78
YES	40	58	8	22
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=12.9;df=3;p <.05)			
I didn't understand which courses were needed for my major.	(N=46)	(N=23)	(N=13)	(N=32)
NO	76	70	54	69
YES	24	30	46	31
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=2.5;df=3;N.S.)			

*see note, Table 4-1.

TABLE 4-8. SATISFACTION WITH STUDENT SERVICES BY LOCATION OF FIRST COLLEGE ATTENDED.*

	Location of First College			
	Trust Territories	Guam	Hawaii	Continental U.S.
Student services were easily available.	(N=45)	(N=23)	(N=13)	(N=31)
NO	9	26	23	23
YES	91	74	77	77
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=4.2;df=3; N.S.)			
The school had a good counseling program.	(N=45)	(N=23)	(N=13)	(N=32)
NO	16	26	8	6
YES	84	74	92	94
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=4.9;df=3; N.S)			
The counseling services were useful to me.	(N=45)	(N=24)	(N=13)	(N=32)
NO	7	42	8	6
YES	93	58	92	94
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=19.3;df=3;p <.05)			
The school had programs that helped students from other places.	(N=46)	(N=23)	(N=13)	(N=31)
NO	13	30	15	3
YES	67	61	62	52
VERY MUCH	20	9	23	45
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=15.8;df=6;p <.05)			

*see note, Table 4-1.

TABLE 4-9. DEGREE COMPLETION BY SELECTED SATISFACTIONS WITH REGISTRATION AND STUDENT SERVICES.

Completed degree at first college	Registration Was Confusing: NO (N=60)	Registration Was Confusing: YES (N=53)
NO	43	57
YES	57	43
	100%	100%

(X^2=1.5;df=1; N.S.)

Completed degree at first college	I Couldn't get the Courses I wanted: NO (N=73)	I Couldn't get the Courses I wanted: YES (N=40)
NO	48	55
YES	52	45
	100%	100%

(X^2=0.3;df=1; N.S.)

Completed degree at first college	Student Services Were Easily Available: NO (N=21)	Student Services Were Easily Available: YES (N=90)
NO	71	44
YES	29	56
	100%	100%

(X^2=3.9;df=1; $p<.05$)

Completed degree at first college	Counseling Services Were Useful To Me.: NO (N=17)	Counseling Services Were Useful To Me.: YES (N=96)
NO	82	45
YES	18	55
	100%	100%

(X^2=6.7;df=1;$p<.05$)

looking at the social as well as academic integration of Micronesian students with their college and its location for understanding what leads a student to either stay in school or leave. Few students withdraw from a college if the only problem is simply the difficulty of registration. It can add weight to a decision to leave, but only in combination with other concerns, such as availability of desired courses and competency at written English. By itself, difficulties in registration were not found to be associated with degree completion among Micronesians (see Table 4-9). Leaving college involves the student's overall situation at home, in classes, within activities outside of school, and the consequences that leaving may have on that situation. Consistent with this view of the dropout, we found withdrawal from the first college attended was related to feeling uninformed about college. Furthermore, the contribution of feelings about counselling services for understanding patterns of withdrawal among Micronesians adds support to this view of the dropout. Shown in Table 4-9, the availability and usefulness of counselling services were found to be associated with degree completion.

The conclusions which can be drawn are not very specific or definitive in nature. Although significant associations were found, the statistics cannot confirm the causal direction. It is not known for sure whether the dissatisfactions led to withdrawal, or if withdrawal was justified by stating dissatisfaction. Consequently, additional research is needed, but directions and potentials for future studies have emerged. The present study surveyed the boundries and form of the college dropout situation in Micronesia. If explanations are to be given, continued investigations need to penetrate beyond over-simplified single-variable models and superficial traits (such as sex, age, cultural values, school size, test scores, and so on). The college dropout situation in Micronesia is complex. The results of the present study suggest that a complex interaction between the student, college preparation, the choice of college, the college itself, and its services makes the difference between graduates and nongraduates. The question of what specifically leads Micronesian students to either stay in school or leave still needs to be answered. But the details being sought should not be too narrow in scope. Toward this end, the next chapter looks at the effects on degree completion of interaction between the student and significant other persons in his or her life.

CHAPTER 5

REFERENCE GROUPS, STRESS, SUPPORT, AND ACHIEVEMENT: A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW OF DROPOUTS AMONG MICRONESIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

The following narrative applies the major features of a social psychological view to the question, why do Micronesian students drop out of college? One basic premise of this view is that before entering a post-secondary institution, a student learns educational achievement motivation. This reflects influence from parents, relatives, peers, and friends, or in other words, the student's reference groups. Educational achievement motivation can be revealed by a student's declared educational plans and by statements of educational values. It can also be indicated by the fact that before entering college a student acquires some level of college preparation, as measured by grade point average, entrance examination scores, and so on.

While at college, most students encounter problems and stressful situations as part of their college experience. Some result from extra-school circumstances (e.g., a death in the family), and while it is acknowledged that such factors are an important basis for dropping out, their effect was not analyzed in this discussion. The emphasis here will be on circumstances related to being at school, which can arise because of inadequate money, poor academic preparation, or social and recreational activities. As a student strives to resolve these stressful circumstances, the people and reference groups he/she associates with play an important role in determining how the problems are resolved. If the reference group environment is supportive and favors achievement, the student's chances of staying in school are increased. If the environment is not supportive, or if the student is socially isolated, the likelihood of giving up (losing motivation to achieve), failing, and dropping out are increased.

Thus, a social psychological view places an emphasis on learned values and social interaction. A high level of achievement motivation in combination with a supportive, pro-achievement environment should increase a student's likelihood of completing a college degree. Correspondingly, as these positive factors decrease, the likelihood of dropping out should increase.

This chapter deals with only two of the many factors that affect success or failure in college, i.e., motivation and social support. It is argued that these become associated with degree completion by modifying stressful and crisis-producing circumstances. "Dropping out" can be viewed as resulting from a series of stress-induced crisis situations, where dropping out is one way of solving the problems. This "stress-crisis-dropout" pattern is but one of various perspectives of the dropout process. An alternative pattern, for example, might involve "drift." Some students "drift" into college, occupy a marginal status while in school, and then "drift out." While "drifting out" and "dropping out due to stress" may be different processes, the present study makes the assumption that one or both of these contribute greatly to students leaving college before graduation.

Four related premises were examined in the present study, two dealing with motivation toward educational achievement, and two that dealt with the social environment as a factor in stress or drift management. These are presented below.

Help While Under Stress: Achievement Motivation and the Social Environment

The importance of motivation as a crucial factor for the study of the dropout process was argued as early as 1962 by Summerskill, and some studies have documented support for this premise (Peng and Fetters, 1977).

> *Achievement Motivation (Premise #1): The greater a student's motivation to make educational achievements, the more years of college he or she will complete.*

Motivation to make educational achievements in this context refers to a subjective desire for education and holding a goal to do well in school or to complete a college degree. It is well documented in the sociological and educational literature that other people's expectations -- parents, peers, and others -- play an important role in influencing a student's educational achievement (Keller, et al., 1978). In the sociological literature such groups are identified as "reference groups," groups that serve as a source of influence and direction when one is making decisions.

In the present study, two reference groups have been identified as having particular significance for the educational experience of Micronesian college students. These are parents and other relatives, and friends, both before entering college and while attending college. Parents and relatives

provide (or do not provide) an initial source of learning educational achievement motivation, and peers/friends either add to or detract from this parent-relative influence. In these terms, a second premise can be stated.

> *Reference Groups and Achievement (Premise #2): The more that parents and relatives expect a student to achieve in education, the more the student will achieve (i.e, complete a degree).*

Students are, of course, motivated to enter college by the desire for many things other than achievement and knowledge. For example, motivation may partially include desires to avoid work, gain status, satisfy parental demands, escape boredom or because there is nothing better to do. An important distinction exists between achievement motivation as used in this discussion and these other types of motivation. Achievement motivation is meant to refer to values held by the person that determine his or her own interests and desires. In contrast to this "internalized" motivation, the other types mentioned are primarily "external" motivations. That is, the motivated goal is an adjustment to a situation outside the person (external), rather than a goal to fulfill one's own interests and desires (internal). The first premise refers to internalized achievement motivation while the second, as stated, implies both internal and external motivations.

The second premise specified family and kinship reference groups. A third premise can be stated to specify friendship and peer reference groups.

> *Social Environment (Premise #3): The greater a student's "pro-achievement social support," the more years of college he or she will complete (i.e., complete a degree).*

"Pro-achievement social support" implies interaction with reference groups at school, which we will call support groups, where approval and help is gained by making academic achievement. These social support groups hold people up when they begin to worry because they face stress and difficulties. Assuming that college can be stressful and difficult for Micronesian students who are serious about their studies, such groups may be very important in overcoming or reducing the many large and small obstacles to educational success. Research has been focused on this kind of mediating role social support groups play in situations where people experience high levels of stress (Caplan, 1974; Dohvenwend and Dohvenwend, 1974; Kaplan, et al., 1977). The idea drawn from this research is that people can

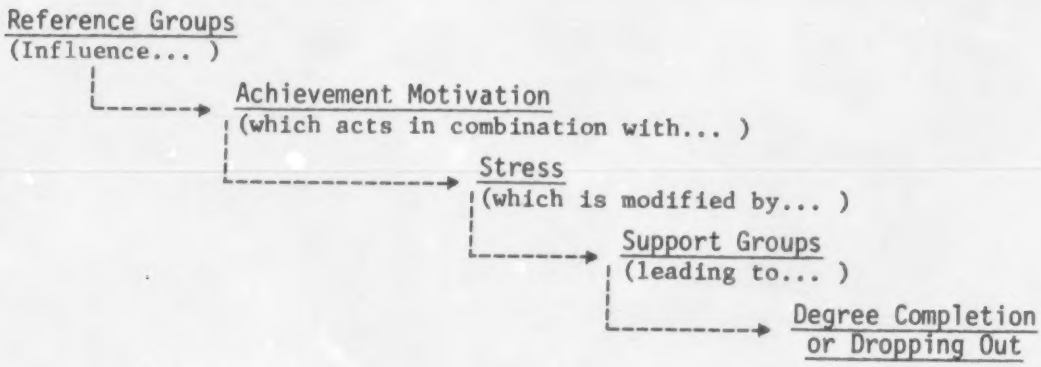
experience high levels of stress and not suffer negative effects, if they also have a high level of support from their social environment (i.e., contact with support groups). A supportive environment has been shown to neutralize the effects of high stress, allowing one to persist when encountering adversities.

Related to the present study, this means that when college becomes stressful for Micronesian students - or any student - because of language, money, or other problems, the presence of friends and other helpful individuals becomes an important factor in how the student resolves the situation and whether or not the student persists or drops out. If friends and others are available, providing friendship and encouragement when they are needed, and if these groups favor achievement (pro-achievement social support), then it is more likely that the student will persist rather than dropout.

Alternatively, without a supportive environment, or if the environment favors non-achievement, the student-in-stress or the low motivation student is more likely to fail or dropout, rather than persevere and achieve. Thus, a fourth premise that encompasses the first three can be added to our list.

> *Stress, Support and Achievement (Premise #4): In a situation of high stress, low motivation, or both, the more friends a student has, and the more these friends value achievement, the more the student will achieve, (i.e., complete a college degree).*

The four interrelated premises and the above discussion can be summarized in the form of the following diagram:



In line with the exploratory design of the current research, no attempt was made to actually test the premises upon which this diagram is based. The premises and the diagram are consistent with the major findings of research on American students, and as such, they provide an illustrative framework of existing knowledge on human behavior for interpreting this study's findings within a meaningful context. There does not yet exist a sufficient amount of research on educational processes within Micronesia for the refinement and clarification of concepts needed to formulate specific hypotheses. Therefore, the objective of the following data analyses was to discover ideas and insights relevant to these social psychological premises and providing a base for the development of testable hypotheses.

Findings and Discussion

Educational achievement motivation and the influence of reference groups was examined by using several indirect measures. These consisted of informant responses to questions on reasons for going to college, the selection of a school and academic major, and values toward educational achievement. For the sake of brevity and to emphasize insights, the discussion will primarily focus on statistically significant associations. The use of statistics in this situation is simply to demonstrate the potential reliability of emergent associations as a basis for suggested conclusions.

To begin, about half of the informants indicated that one of their reasons for attending college was the suggestion of an elder or parent. The implication of the question strongly suggests family pressure toward educational achievement, and yet, no difference was found in the probability of college graduation between those who went to college for this reason and those who did not. Clearly, the process of reference group influence is not

"An elder or parent said I should go to college"

Degree Completion:	Yes (N=60)	No (N=55)
YES	55	60
NO	45	40
	100%	100%

(χ^2=0.1; N.S.)

simple or just a matter of pleasing the family. In support of the first and second premises, several other measures suggest that the concept of "internalized" educational achievement motivation may be more critical than "external" motivation. That is, individuals are more likely to finish college if the goal is to meet their own interests, rather than a goal for their life which is assigned by someone else.

In regard to this insight, significant differences between informants were found in value judgements of reasons for going to college and for selection of a college. First, the view that a good reason for going to college is to bring honor and status to the family was found to be held more widely among those who never attended college than among persons who actually experienced postsecondary education. There was very little difference among those informants who attended college, whether they ever completed a degree or not. Because informants responded "after the fact," it is not known if the college experience itself caused this different value judgement, or if this value judgement caused a difference

"Going to college to bring honor and status to the family is":

	Completers (N=69)	Noncompleters (N=50)	Never Attended (N=31)
A Good Reason	45	46	68
Nuetral	42	34	23
A Bad Reason	13	20	9
	100%	100%	100%

($p < .05$)

in the probability of college attendance. Nonetheless, this external source of motivation was devalued by those who at least attempted to begin college.

Differences between completers and noncompleters were found, however, in their reasons for choosing a particular school and academic major. Students who selected a school and an academic major for personal reasons, or at least not because of family ties were more likely to graduate than others (over 60% compared to about 40%).

"Selected school because family member or friends had gone there or lived nearby"

Degree Completion:	YES (N=40)	NO (N=48)
YES	43	67
NO	57	33
	100%	100%

(X^2=5.6; $p<.05$)

"Chose academic major because of personal interest"

Degree Completion:	YES (N=93)	NO (N=23)
YES	64	35
NO	36	65
	100%	100%

(X^2=5.6; $p<.05$)

The measures used here were not, perhaps, the most appropriate variables for a direct test of achievement motivation and reference group influence. But they are illustrative of insights to educational processes among Micronesians. How can one understand, in terms of a social psychological approach, that the request of a parent or family elder had no apparent effect on college completion, and that the selection of a school on the basis of family connections tended to decrease a student's chances of graduation? Such extraordinary behavioral relations are intensified by the documented complexity of Micronesian kinship systems and the patterns of behavior and educational forms that have evolved in coordination with these. The discussion in Chapter 1 (p. 8) highlighted the nature of traditional educational motivation within Micronesia -- the placement of meaningful emphasis upon deference to the family group, in contrast to the Western placement of emphasis upon individual gain.

On the surface these observations appear to be inconsistent. It is the inclusion of the differences found in educational values toward college attendance that provide some insight of a possible understanding. Clearly, the process whereby reference groups, such as family, influence individuals

and become a source of motivation is not just a matter of external pressures and expectations. The data on these Kosraean and Ponapean students suggest that personally relevant reasons and goals contributed to degree completion. Yet a person does not create his or her own reasons and goals independently of all other persons, especially members of one's social family. A social psychological framework identifies a person's interaction with reference groups as the source of learned and internalized values (see diagram p. 63). Thus, the data can be interpreted as consistent with the first two premises and to illustrate the importance of the idea of internalized, educational motivation. The findings of the present study support the recommendation that this line of research should be pursued in order to test hypotheses about the ways in which this process operates within Micronesian cultures.

Additional support for this recommendation emerged from the examination of data pertinent to the third and fourth premises. In this case the results were more conclusive. These premises imply that the greater a student's involvement in social support groups, there should be a corresponding increased probability of graduation. A good indicator of involvement in social support groups conducive to achievement is membership in formally organized activities and clubs (i.e., for discussions of this reasoning, see Merton, 1968; Mizruchi, 1964; Nisbet, 1953). The degree of involvement in support groups was measured by separating informants on the criterion: "Did you ever belong to any organizations or clubs?" The informants were asked this question for both their high school and college experiences.

	CLUB MEMBERSHIP			
	High School		College	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Degree Completion:	(N=71)	(N=43)	(N=69)	(N=49)
YES	69	40	67	47
NO	31	60	33	53
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(X^2=8.4; $p<.05$)		(X^2=4.5; $p<.05$)	

About two-thirds of those who belonged to clubs during either high-school or college eventually graduated from college, compared to less than half of those who never belonged to such groups. The assumption made for

interpreting these significant associations is that membership indicates greater interaction with supportive groups and non-membership indicates less, or in other words greater isolation.

A more direct measure of the level of interaction with other club members is whether or not a person was a club officer (i.e., greater interaction) or not (i.e., less interaction). These analyses were restricted to those who actually belonged to a club or organization while they were in college. The probability of graduation was greater for more

	Ever Elected Club Officer in College	
Degree Completion:	YES (N=33)	NO (N=33)
YES	82	54
NO	18	46
	100%	100%

(X^2=4.5; $p < .05$)

active club members than for those who only belonged. The association was statistically significant for memberships in college, only, and not for high school memberships. However, it is within college that the interaction with social support groups is most directly capable of modifying stressful obstacles to degree completion.

The third premise was clearly supported by these significant associations. They lend support to the fourth premise as well, if it is assumed that high stress, low motivation, or both significantly contributed to leaving college among the more isolated students. This specific aspect of the fourth premise was not examined in the current report, but the findings presented herein demonstrate that it has potential for continued research.

Supportive Reference Groups and Achievement

A social psychological view of the question, why do Micronesian students dropout of college?, is but one of various perspectives that can be applied to gain some understanding of this complex phenomenon. Other perspectives, focusing upon other contributing factors such as the college institution itself, were discussed in previous chapters. The argument analyzed above suggests that supportive reference groups greatly contribute

to a student's capacity to cope with the college experience. However, the impact of supportive reference groups can only be understood in reference to the student, the college institution and their interaction. In light of this, the support found for the premises developed initially in this chapter expands the understanding obtained from the present research to a more holistic exploration of college dropouts.

Support was found or implied for the premises that college completion is in part a function of:

Achievement Motivation: The greater a student's motivation to make educational achievements, the more years of college he or she will complete.

Reference Groups and Achievement: The more that parents and relatives expect a student to achieve in education, the more the student will achieve.

Social Environment: The greater a student's "pro-achievement social support," the more years of college he or she will complete.

Stress, Support, and Achievement: In a situation of high stress, low motivation, or both, the more friends a student has, and the more these friends value achievement, the more the student will achieve.

These premises provide a basis for the development of more specific hypotheses which can be tested by future and more directed research efforts.

CONCLUSION HIGHLIGHTS

This study has provided baseline explorations of the situation and associated factors of Micronesians not completing degree programs in higher education. Such baselines provide the necessary map for future research which certainly must proceed if a greater understanding of the problem is sought.

Importantly, this study has made it clear that college dropout rates in Micronesia are not abnormally high statistically. In fact, the estimated figures are comparable to other nations in the world including the United States. More revealingly, the study suggests that in the past, the problem issue of college dropouts in Micronesia has been somewhat oversimplified. The issue is less of a need to reduce the dropout rate, but rather of finding ways to help Micronesians achieve in college, to aid their attempts at finding relevance there, and to make their return an integrated part of Micronesian life. Pervin and his associates (1966) stated it well, describing the dropout process as "*a phenomenon that highlights the ancient struggle between the environment and the individual, each striving to modify the other in ways as complex as life itself, until a better balance is achieved* (p. 3)." For Micronesia, it would be most appropriate to replace the term *individual* in the above quote with the phrase *family and community*. The policy implication, however, remains the same. The Micronesian leadership must decide what they want higher education to be and do for their people.

Micronesians attend college for a variety of reasons, including simply to get away from their home islands. Going to college satisfies values in both the traditional and the newly-developing cultures of Micronesia. A Micronesian can gain prestige simply by going away to attend college even if he or she doesn't graduate. Also, however, college education is becoming an important requirement for achievement and success in the new post-Trusteeship Micronesian society.

Micronesians are selective in their choice of college, and some of them work while attending school. Those enrolled outside of Micronesia are overwhelmingly at small colleges and usually two-year community colleges.

There is a continuing need for counseling before, during, and after enrollment, and it is important that students feel integrated into the college environment particularly through various clubs and associations at the school. The study showed that in cases where this occurred degree completion was helped by reducing feelings of isolation.

Most Micronesians go to college directly after high school, and efforts are made to provide funds to see them through at least a two-year program. However, they have great difficulties with the management of money, and this is a particular area where counseling is needed.

Finally, emerging from this study it seems that participation in higher education programs for Micronesians is important and will continue to be in the future. But for the moment, this participation is not as relevant, effective, and efficient as the Micronesians would like it to be.

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APPENDIX A

THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research problem which confronted us -- postsecondary education of Micronesians -- is very new. Not only is it new as an emergent and developing part of Micronesian culture, but existing knowledge about it is extremely limited. A few speculative and insightful works have been written, and the studies on Trukese college students by Hezel (1978) and Larson (1979) have ignited a light on the topic. The present study was begun in response to the questions raised by Hezel's work and attempted to add to the community's knowledge of the situation. When we began to design the study, we realized that the necessary knowledge about college education of Micronesians was not very complete; many questions existed but nothing gave us a clear understanding needed to formulate a precise statement of the problem and testable hypotheses. The study's objective became the need to gain this important familiarity with the actual events of college education among Micronesians. This familiarity is important to social science researchers, community leaders, and policy makers. In order for continued research to provide more meaningful answers, information is needed for developing meaningful questions.

To achieve this objective, the present study was exploratory. The major emphasis was on the discovery of insights into the processes of college education among Micronesians by examination of major factors and variables known to be associated with human behavior. Therefore, the research design had to be flexible enough to permit consideration of many different aspects of postsecondary education. The primary tool for data gathering was an interviewer-administered questionnaire. In addition to the information based on informant responses, permission was asked to collect data from high school and college transcript records. A third data source, directed toward the institution of college education rather than the student, was a survey form mailed to the colleges attended by the study sample. Unfortunately, the return rate of surveys from the colleges was so low that it was impractical to try to use the information within this reported analysis. Available information on most of the colleges was collected from catalogues, bulletins, and published directories

in an attempt to remedy this obstacle. The final research design was a multi-source, cross-sectional study of postsecondary education among Micronesians.

The decision to focus efforts on a questionnaire methodology was also new for empirical research in Micronesia. Its advantage was the ability to collect a large amount of information on a sizeable study population in a timely and cost effective manner. The nature of the research problem made this an appropriate choice, also, since education itself is a long-term, broad series of events, and the informants would at least have graduated from high school. However, there are limitations inherent in this methodology, especially in the case of cross-cultural research. For example, although a questionnaire provides standardized questions, instructions and set order, which ensure some uniformity from one informant situation to another, this uniformity may be more on the surface than real. A written question may have different meanings for different informants and may be understood by some and not understood by others. Efforts were made to diminish this and other limitations. These are discussed below in relation to the study's sampling technique, procedures for data collection, and construction of the questionnaire. Nonetheless, an additional function of exploratory studies is to experience and evaluate practical possibilities for carrying out research. In these terms, the present study provided a means to implement modifications in a questionnaire methodology for adapting it to use in Micronesia. The overall experience of the present study and the continued development of Micronesia suggest that structured questionnaires are a promising alternative method for appropriate research problems in Micronesia.

The Sample

Postsecondary education by definition, assumes completion of secondary education. The study's principal target population, therefore, consisted of high school graduates who represent the base from which college students and potential college dropouts emerge. However, the expanse and cultural diversity of Micronesia made any attempt to draw a study sample from every state district unrealistic. A major consideration was the practicality of concentrating the collection of data, which involved

hiring and training local interviewers. More important for the study itself, the existing diversity of cultural configurations makes the term "Micronesia" more of a politically convenient label rather than the name of a real, socio-culturally unified community. Consequently, the present study was restricted to Ponape and Kosrae in the eastern Caroline Islands in order to attempt a partial control of extraneous cultural factors.

An additional concern in the sampling design was to ensure an adequate number of college returnees among the final surveyed sample. Our concern, perhaps unjustified in retrospect, was that there might be a low proportion of college student returnees on the islands at the time of data collection. Since the objective of the study was exploratory, rather than hypothesis testing, it was decided to compose a true random sample procedure. For the above reasons, a list of 470 individuals was compiled from:

(1) a random selection of 370 graduates from Pacific Islands Central School (PICS, Ponape) and Kosrae High School between 1968 and 1975, and

(2) a supplemental sample of 100 Ponapean and Kosraean college students who were awarded scholarships drawn from the records of the Trust Territory Department of Education located on Saipan.

Removal of the names of persons known to be off-island by local consultants resulted in a final sampling list of 380 names. Slightly over half of these individuals were contacted by the interviewers, and 152 completed questionnaires were obtained. This represented 40 percent of the final sampling list, or about 74 percent of estimated contacts. An overview of the study sample and discussion of its representativeness of the target population is presented in Chapter 2.

Permission to obtain information from high school transcripts was granted by only 89 (59%) of the study sample. In addition, college transcripts were obtained for only 64 (53%) of those who attended college. As discussed in Chapter 4, the resultant subsamples with transcript information appear to be biased toward higher grade point averages. This bias limited the use of the data and the reliability of any conclusions which can be drawn from them. In a few cases among college students who gave permission, the college refused to release transcripts because of unpaid bills. Nevertheless, transcript information is a sensitive topic, like requests for total income or opinions about a person's own children. Sensitive topics require carefully planned procedures and special efforts. Thus, the major shortfall probably rests with our procedure for obtaining

permission, which simply consisted of having the interviewer casually request permission at the end of the interview. Procedural problems clearly account for the extremely low return rate of surveys mailed to collect information from the colleges themselves. Budget and time costs did not permit more than one mailing, which brought returns from only nineteen colleges and universities. Follow-up letters and second mailings are common procedures for increasing return rates for this type of methodology. These and other techniques can bring about better results.

Questionnaire Construction and the Interview

The limitations of the present research due to the above problems with data collection from transcripts and colleges are serious in their own right, but they had little impact on the reliability or validity of the study's major data source. In regard to this issue, the procedures for constructing the questionnaire and carrying out the interviews were very important. The instrument designed for the study was comprised of seven sections and required approximately two hours to complete. Information was obtained on social opinions, educational values and expectations, a detailed educational history, college experiences and opinions, and detailed demographic and life-history traits.

Also included in the questionnaire was a modified version of the Crowne-Marlowe "Social Desirability Scale" used by Alan Howard (1974) in a study of ethnic Hawaiians. This test was originally developed to measure the extent to which informants are likely to give socially approved responses rather than expressing their own opinions. We have not yet made an attempt to statistically validate the index, and because of the nature of this cross-cultural application, it is difficult to estimate its content validly (e.g., does it measure what it is thought to measure?). However, our objective was to have a reasonable index of response reliability, and as reported below we have avoided overstating any conclusions. Toward this end, efforts were made to maximize the comprehension of question items.

Obviously the greatest obstacle to informant comprehension is language. This presented a dilemma since English was a second language for all of our informants and yet the only language they held in common. Regional phrases were used where it was appropriate, or Ponapean and Kosraean words were

inserted within parentheses as stimulus cues. The most important procedure used to enhance comprehension was the technique of "back-translation" for the major attitudinal question items, including the social desirability scale (Sechrest, et al.; 1972). Statements were compiled into an English version listing, which was given to a group of Ponapean and Kosraean students attending the University of Guam. They were asked to translate the statements into their own vernacular. These were then back-translated into English by a second group of students. Comparisons were made between the original and back-translated English versions. Original wordings were either kept, replaced with a student's version, or the items were eliminated as uncomprehensible.

Several additional procedures were employed to enhance comprehension and reliability within the interview session itself. The interviewers were the critical link between the questionnaire and the informants. They could do the most to handle any unforeseen difficulties. For this reason, twenty-four local, bi-lingual interviewers were hired and underwent an intensive training workshop in Ponape and in Kosrae. The interviewers were department of education personnel, teachers, and college students or former college students. We were also aware that strong normative regulations regarding the interactions of males and females exist in the island cultures, and thus made sure there were both male (19) and female (5) interviewers. Although an over-explanation of questionnaire items was discouraged, flexibility was encouraged to conduct the interviews in English and/or the vernacular, depending upon the comfortableness of the interviewer and the informant.

Another procedure was to actively involve the informant in the interview. This was accomplished, in part, by allowing the respondent to self-administer one section of the questionnaire, and in part by the use of laminated response cards within several questionnaire sections. To break the routine about midway in the interview, the section containing items for the social desirability index and other opinions was duplicated on a removable sheet of paper to be filled out by the informant. Since this series of statements was duplicated, the interviewer could provide assistance by referring to the questionnaire booklet and avoid being too obtrusive. In several other sections containing opinions and attitudinal type items, laminated response cards were handed to the informants to actively engage them in the process of responding. We hoped that this

would prompt two consequences. First, we assumed that reading and visualizing the information on the cards would enhance comprehension in addition to having the interviewer voice the statement. Secondly, the act of placing statement cards in a designated response pile would actively involve the respondent in the administration of the questionnaire. We assumed that the active consciousness of making a response might increase response validity, and moreover, it might reduce boredom from the lengthy questionnaire.

Table A-1 presents the tabulated results of the modified social desirability index. Twenty-eight item statements were selected and modified, such as *"No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener,"* *"I am always careful about the way I dress,"* and *"I find it difficult to get along with boastful, selfish people."* Informants were asked to respond 'True' or 'False' to each statement, and depending on the statement, the response was scored as '1' to indicate a socially desirable or ideal answer, or scored as '0' to indicate a less socially desirable or ideal answer. The higher the total score between 0 and 28 would mirror a greater tendency to give socially desirable responses.

TABLE A-1. PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL SAMPLE BY SCORE ON SOCIAL DESIRABILITY INDEX

	Index Score	Proportion of Items Marked with Socially Desirable Responses	Percent of Sample (N=149)
Low	0 to 7	1/4 or Less	13
	8 to 14	1/4 to 1/2	56
	15 to 21	1/2 to 3/4	30
High	22 to 28	Over 3/4	1
			100%

Without a comparison of the same index given to an independent sample population or employed within a different study, we cannot evaluate if the scores were better or worse than what could be expected. However, the average score within the study's sample was 12, which indicates that

informants tended to make about four socially desirable responses out of every ten statements. The observation that nearly a third of the sample gave socially desirable responses more than half of the time clearly weakens any demonstration suggestive of an overall high level of response validity for opinion-type items in this study. Nonetheless, only one percent of the sample scored extremely high and a definite majority (69 percent) were apparently prone to give their honest opinion most of the time.

Any research methodology must attempt to maximize the reliability and validity of its results. This requires consideration of many aspects of the study's design, instrument construction and procedure for data collection, but some efforts turn out to be more productive than others. On-going research is itself a learning exercise of how to acquire knowledge about the world in which we live. The present research study reported here has its strengths and weaknesses, but as a whole, a conscious effort was made to reduce its limitations.

APPENDIX B

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED BY THE STUDY SAMPLE

Trust Territory of the Pacific

Community College of Micronesia (CCM)
Micronesian Occupational College (MOC)
Trust Territory Nursing School

Extension Programs

University of Hawaii
Chaminade University
Ponape Teacher Training Center
Guam Trade and Technical School
South Pacific Commission
University of Oregon

Guam

University of Guam
Guam Community College

Hawaii

University of Hawaii
Honolulu Community College
Kapiolani Community College
Hawaii Pacific College
Hilo College
Maui Community College
Chaminade University
Brigham Young University
U.S. International University
Cannon's International Business College

U.S. West Coast

California State University
University of Northern California
California Maritime Academy
Modesto Junior College
College of California
U.S. International University
University of San Diego
University of California
Diablo Valley College

Colleges and Universities Attended by the Study Sample (Continued)

U.S. West Coast (continued)

Biola College
University of Oregon
Oregon Educational College
Portland Community College
Marylhurst College
Portland State University

U.S. West

Otero Junior College

U.S. South West

Eastern New Mexico University

U.S. Mid-West

University of Michigan
Suomi College
Alpena Community College
Northern Michigan University
Lake Superior State College
Grand Valley State College
Grand Rapids Junior College
Concordia Teachers College
Park College
Toledo Bible College
Indiana State University
Manchester College
Bethany College
Bethel College

U.S. South

University of Florida

Colleges and Universities Attended by the Study Sample (Continued)

U.S. East

Theil College
State University of New York at Albany

Foreign

Forestry College, Papua New Guinea
Malua Theological College, Western Samoa
Silliman University, Philippines

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